A Fox With Human Eyes

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Bakugou Katsuki, Bakugou Mitsuki, Bakugou Masaru, Midoriya Izuku, Midoriya Inko, Todoroki Shouto, Todoroki Enji | Endeavor, Todoroki Family (My Hero Academia), Class 1-A (My Hero Academia), Shinsou Hitoshi, Yamada Hizashi | Present Mic, Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead, Yagi Toshinori | All Might, Kirishima Eijirou, Kaminari Denki, Ashido Mina, Sero Hanta

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eventual todobakudeku, starts off as bakudeku, Kitsune, Kitsune Bakugou Katsuki, M/M/M, no beta we die like pro heroes, I Will Go Down With This Ship, Bakugou Katsuki Swears A Lot, Protective Bakugou Katsuki, Bakugou Katsuki is Bad at Feelings, Todoroki Enji | Endeavor's Bad Parenting, Dabi and Todoroki Shouto Are Siblings, Cute Todoroki Shouto, Todoroki Shouto is Bad at Feelings, Quirkless Midoriya Izuku, Midoriya Izuku Does Not Have One for All Quirk, Midoriya Izuku is a Ray of Sunshine, Support Department Midoriya Izuku, Dadzawa, Class 1-A Shenanigans (My Hero Academia), Shinsou Hitoshi is in Class 1-A, Class 1-A as Family (My Hero Academia), Polyamory, will update tags as needed, Good Parent Midoriya Inko, BAMF Midoriya Inko, Protective Midoriya Inko, Implied/Referenced Child Abuse, Cute Midoriya Izuku, Midoriya

Izuku is a Dork, Bisexual Midoriya Izuku, Demisexual Todoroki Shouto, Gay Bakugou Katsuki, Implied/Referenced Suicide attempt, just very briefly though, and none for our main boys don't worry, Deaf Bakugou Katsuki, Hard of Hearing Bakugou Katsuki, Spanish Sero Hanta, Latin Sero Hanta, Trans Sero Hanta

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BNHA BEST CHAPTER FICS TO EVER GRACE THE INTERNET, nonsense station's discord recs!, BooksToMonitor, Absolute re-reads, BKG Fic-List, Stories That Are Cool, My Favourites to read, Behold the Sacred Texts, Fics that made me stim, Best stories for sleepless nights, The Best of the BNHA (mostly BKDK), Seul's Favorite BNHA Fics, Fics That Are The Good Kush□□ lol, Books that haven't updated in a while but I still love, Blasty💥, Scrumptious_mha_fics_with_correct_Naming_ terminology!! (w_few_exceptions!!)

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A Fox With Human Eyes

by MidnightTrashGoblin

Summary

Katsuki stared at her for a moment before huffing and turning his head back into his curled body, his nose nuzzling into Izuku's neck and making the other boy giggle sleepily. They stayed like that long after Inko was sure they were asleep, long after her heart had calmed and the panic had ebbed away.
Human.
Mitsuki had written the word like it was foreign to her. Now she knew why.
Katsuki was too young for a quirk to manifest. Sure, signs physical quirks could manifest early, but the quirk itself? Never.
This wasn't a quirk. Mitsuki had even told her so. It was something more. Something not entirely human.
What, though, she wasn't sure.

Or

The one where Bakugou Katsuki is half Kitsune and is adorably protective of his little pack.

Notes

This will eventually be a TodoBakuDeku fic, but not until we get to their high school years. Until then it's mostly BakuDeku. The first few chapters are going to be a lot of time skips while we lead up to UA, mostly glimpses throughout Katsuki and Izuku's lives. Mind the tags, but I don't really plan on there being anything super triggering in this story. If there is, I'll be sure to warn you ahead of time!

Hope everyone loves reading this as much as I loved writing it!

Chapter 1: Human

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

My dearest Inko,

To ask this of you is too much, I know that and I hope you know that this was never the plan. There is so much I cannot tell you, so much you cannot know, but please believe me when I tell you it's for your own safety. By now I'm sure I'm gone and you are confused, maybe worried. I cannot apologize enough to you for this terrible burden I've placed on your shoulders. But Inko, you have been and always will be my closest friend. I trust no one more than you, so please know that you were my only choice. I trust you to take care of Katsuki, as I'm afraid I cannot.

What I can tell you is a bit about myself, and what to expect as my son grows.

I come from a very traditional family with very pure and spiritual blood. I wish I could give you exact details, but I fear you would not believe me. You'd think me mad. Please know that if I could tell you, I would. Regardless of this, I escaped that family when I was very young. It was overbearing and I was rebellious. You know me, nothing could tie me down. I wanted something normal, something human. And in doing so, I found a friend. I found you. I knew eventually they would track me down, I knew I would have to go home, but you held me here. You gave me something to fight for. I'd never had a true friend before, not like you.

And with you came Masaru. I still remember when we'd met him in your Art History class. He was lovely, pure, unabashedly human. And I fell in love. Katsuki was an unexpected side effect of that love. I don't regret him, I never could, but I regret what may become of him in his future. The struggles he will have to go through. What I've sentenced him to without his knowing.

Masaru is a good man, please remember that, but he is not strong. Not like you are. He could not handle the truth of what I am. What Katsuki is. Do not blame him for leaving, I don't. But you Inko are probably the strongest person I know. And I know that doesn't make this fair to you. I know you could grow to hate me for this, that you may never forgive me, but please know that this was my only choice in keeping my son safe. Safe until he is old enough to make his own decisions.

Katsuki is not like other children, Inko. You'll see that soon enough. He will be strange, and I'm afraid since he is only half of me, I cannot give you a clear warning of what to expect. You will have to learn him and he will have to learn you. He will have instincts that neither of you will understand, abilities that he will struggle to control. They'll be similar to quirks, but do not treat them as such. They will be so much stronger than he will ever know.

I beg of you Inko not to abandon him. I know I have no right to ask that of you. I know you will look at him and think him dangerous one day, but please love him as you did me. Love him as if he were your own. Protect him when I can't.

You most likely will not see me again, and that hurts my heart to say, but it's for the best. If my family found out about Katsuki, I'm afraid of what they might do to him. I know that makes no sense to you, but I cannot allow them to know about Katsuki. They've gotten too close already and I have to leave before they learn any more. I've left you all the money I have, though I know that doesn't even scratch the surface of the debt I owe you for this. Masaru has left to America, but the house is free for you as well if you like. I know your apartment is not large enough for two growing boys. I've already signed the lease to you and arranged paperwork for Katsuki's adoption. When the time comes, when you start to notice that Katsuki is too much for you alone, there is a shop on the corner of Sobetsu and Norsa. Ask for Auntie Hinko. She will know what to do.

Please do not look for me, Inko.

~ Mitsuki

PS. When he asks, please tell Katsuki I love him. He won't believe me, I'm sure, but I need him to hear it anyway. I need him to know that I wouldn't have left if I had the choice.

Thank you, my friend.

A letter and a bundle of awkward limbs wrapped up in blankets. That's all Inko got the day Mitsuki disappeared and Katsuki was left on her doorstep. A lawyer called later in the day, between her frantic unanswered calls to her friend's phone and her hundredth re-read of the letter, to discuss signing the adoption papers and to hand over rights to Mitsuki's accounts. She wasn't quite sure when she'd agreed to meet the lawyer at the Bakugou's home, but before she knew it there she was… standing in the living room with two little twin bundles wrapped against her torso, held up only by cloth and a

mother's love.

It all felt like too much, like it was a dream inside a dream. Unreal.

Mitsuki was gone. Just like that.

If it weren't for the tiny blonde swaddled up against her chest, his fingers wrapped tight around Izuku's, Inko might have thought her friend never existed in the first place. Their house was empty of anything that wasn't furniture or Katsuki's things. There were no pictures, no files, no clothes. No sign that anyone but a baby might have ever lived there. Even the lawyer came and went with an air of nonexistence. The ink stains on her fingers from his pen the only reminder that he'd been there at all.

Katsuki grumbled from his blanket, shifting enough to draw her attention down to his little blonde head, watching in amazement as he snuggled up against her own son, pressing his face into the soft green curls that were forming on his head.

It was then that she realized… it had never even crossed her mind to say no to the boy. While everything was moving so quickly and she wasn't quite sure what was happening, she'd signed the adoption papers without a second thought. She'd grabbed the little boy and held him tight without thinking twice.

Because of course, she would care for him. *Of course*.

He was just a baby. How could she dare to turn him away?

And Mitsuki was her friend, her closest friend- maybe her only friend. Taking Katsuki in didn't seem like a big deal. Her worry sat more with what had happened. What Mitsuki meant when she worried what her family '*might do*' to Katsuki. Her worry sat with the strange implications of Katsuki being different. Of the way Mitsuki had said the word 'human' in her letter like it was a stranger to her.

And still yet, she held both boys tight as the day drifted into night. She smiled at the little red and green eyes that blinked up at her in confusion when she set them in a crib so that she could pack. She cooed at them as she hung All Might posters on the walls of their new room and hung her own photos on the bare walls of her friend's house. She rocked them to sleep as she signed an early release on her apartment.

Because Mitsuki had asked her to be strong, so that's what she was

going to do.

Any photos she had of her and Mitsuki were kept in a locked drawer at the bottom of her desk along with the letter that started all this. She vowed never to open it until Katsuki was old enough, until he started asking questions she couldn't answer fully.

Some part deep inside of her worried. Some part knew that there was danger behind what Mitsuki was involved in and that it would be risky to leave any trace of the woman out in the open. That fear and worry had her changing the blonde's last name to Midoriya, had her filing divorce papers with a man across the ocean that she hadn't seen since Izuku was conceived. Their marriage was one born of necessity when Izuku came along, and their divorce was the same when Katsuki came along. He didn't seem to mind.

And something in her settled in those next few months. She had never necessarily wanted more children, and it'd always been a given that Katsuki and Izuku would be friends, as their mothers were so close, but it warmed something in her regardless to know that Izuku would never be alone. That he had someone there to love him and protect him. The boys were barely months apart, but they were practically inseparable.

They'd be okay, she decided when she watched Katsuki curl protectively around Izuku as they slept. They'd be okay, she decided when she walked in and heard a strange sort of purring through Katsuki's chest, dulling Izuku's cries before they could grow.

They'd be okay. Because she would make sure of it.

As the boys grew older, Inko began to understand what Mitsuki meant when she said the blonde would be different from other children.

When he was still tiny enough to swaddle in her arms, he would nuzzle her. It wasn't unheard of for babies, but Inko knew better than to think it normal in this case. He would bury his face in her neck, or in Izuku hair, rubbing and rubbing until his cheeks were red and he was satisfied. When he was upset he'd dig his fingers into her shirt and pull her closer and closer and closer, like just her scent would calm him down. It reminded her of a kitten in ways, the way they'd find solace in the scents of their family.

It only grew from there, the things that made him unusual.

Katsuki was… wild. Animalistic almost at times. He'd started walking long before Izuku, toddling around the house with too much energy and never failing to drag his green haired best friend into all his trouble. Neither boy could talk yet, but it didn't stop the strange, yet adorable, sounds that escaped the blonde's lips. She'd managed to figure them out for the most part. Most common were the yips. Little high pitched barks that little boys shouldn't be able to make. Then the purring, always when they were asleep or someone was upset. It was calming, comforting. And finally there were the growls, low in Katsuki's chest and rumbling through the air like thunder. Always when he was upset or disgruntled. If someone he didn't know got too close to either Midoriya's. Izuku found them absolutely endearing, giggling and gurgling anytime Katsuki did it, which of course made the proud little boy do it even more.

With the walking, however, came the disappearing. Inko was lucky to be able to work from home, though with Mitsuki's fortune that was left to her, she didn't need to. Still, she needed something to do during the day, so she had decided to teach English to students online. The boys would usually be in her eyesight during her 'work hours', set up on a little blanket nearby with toys and games to keep them occupied.

But as soon as Katsuki was able to walk he was able to… vanish. It's the only word Inko could think to use. One moment she could see the boys in the corner of her eye and the next, Katsuki would be gone.

He was never far. Usually curled up, giggling, under a table or cupboard. Sometimes she would be looking right at him, but all it took was a blink and he was suddenly behind her, cackling like it was the funniest thing in the world. Inko's poor little heart couldn't help but disagree. Luckily for her, Katsuki never seemed to wander far. He kept them in his sight for the most part, or in his vicinity. Inko learned very early on that Katsuki did not like being apart fromher, but especially didn't like being apart from Izuku. (The doctor's visit for their shots and yearly check in was a nightmare and a half when the doctor tried to examine them in separate rooms.)

It was this reason and this reason alone that she didn't scold him for his strange… ability. Though she did set up ground rules, areas he wasn't supposed to hide (the oven, the washer or dryer, etc). She also made sure he knew never to do it while they were out in public. She wanted him close because she couldn't live with herself if he got lost or taken during one of his little hide-and-seek games.

She couldn't help but wonder what other abilities he'd get as he grew

older. Whether he'd have a quirk or not, if it would somehow relate to whatever… *this* was that Mitsuki had warned her about. Whether she'd be able to handle it all on her own.

"Kat!"

"Kat!"

Inko jolted awake almost instantly, head foggy but eyes already zoning in on the baby monitor next to the bed. Izuku was there, standing with the help of the crib's bars, waving a pudgy little hand in the direction of the camera. His eyes were bright on the screen, a wide grin on his face. Katsuki was no where to be seen.

"Kat!"

Her son's voice met her at the door when she finally stumbled in, tripping slightly on her indoor slippers and Izuku giggled at the display, hands reaching for her already, babbling and cooing. "Izuku, sweetheart," she said quietly, frantic eyes searching the crib for Katsuki but seeing nothing but rumpled blankets and their All Might stuffies. She ran a hand over her son's green curls, kneeling slightly with a shakey smile. "Can you tell me where Katsuki is?"

Because Katsuki had a habit of disappearing throughout the day to hide, but it'd never been at night. Never when she wasn't there to find him. He'd never left his shared crib.

Izuku giggled, and if he wasn't so young and barely able to talk, she might have thought there was some sort of mischief in his eyes. Still, he smacked a tiny hand across her cheek eagerly before turning and stumbling his way to the other side of the crib. "Kat! Kat!" His foot caught on the blanket and he laughed as he tumbled, landing on his hands and knees. It didn't seem to bother him though as he grabbed on of the blankets in the corner, tugging it to reveal-

A fox?

The thing was about the size of a full grown cat, though she suspected it was nothing more than a kit, with sharp red and orange and black fur, curling over it's little body like flames in the darkness. It's ears twitched, bright red eyes blinking open as Izuku fisted his fingers in the soft-looking fur. A contented purr escaped the fox and Inko jolted at the familiar sound.

It couldn't be…

Without really thinking, Inko lowered the front section of the crib and placed herself on the floor beside it, her head resting on the matress and fingers reaching forward slowly. The fox stared at her, disgruntled at being woken, but not antagonistic, so she sank her own fingers into the fur behind it's ears. The fox melted almost instantly, his purr growing louder and eyes blinking sluggishly.

"Katsuki? Is that you?"

She felt a little ridiculous talking to an animal, but those red eyes were so familiar, so intelligent. She had no doubt that the little creature before her was in fact her own hyperactive blonde ward. No wonder Izuku had been so excited. "C-can you change back?" She asked, voice shakey and heart pounding. She still wasn't completely convinced this wasn't a dream, but the texture under her fingers was much too real and the giggling of her son as he crawled over and laid his head on the fox's- on *Katsuki's*- body, was too real.

Katsuki stared at her for a moment before huffing and turning his head back into his curled body, his nose nuzzling into Izuku's neck and making the other boy giggle sleepily. They stayed like that long after Inko was sure they were asleep, long after her heart had calmed and the panic had ebbed away.

Human.

Mitsuki had written the word like it was foreign to her. Now she knew why.

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What, though, she wasn't sure.

The next morning found Inko waking up with a crick in her neck from sleeping leaned up against the crib, two sets of red and green eyes blinking down at her. Katsuki was still in his fox form, but he was clearly more awake, his little black paws batting at her face until she was fully awake. She'd hoped he would be back to normal by the time morning came but… apparently not.

She waited three days before she cracked.

Katsuki wasn't as calm in his fox form. He had too much energy like this, running and bouncing, pawing at her legs for attention, only to crash an hour later across her shoulders like a contented house cat. It was adorable, but worrying. She wasn't sure what would happen next, if he would stay like this forever or be able to turn back. Had Mitsuki been able to change into a fox as well?

That question is what had her packing Izuku into his carseat and Katsuki into an oversized purse she dug out of her closet. He had glared at it in question, but once inside seemed perfectly contented to take a nap on the drive.

The shop on Sobetsu and Norsa wasn't far from Mitsuki's home. It was a humble little building just out of the way to not be noticed much with trinkets and spiritual oddities in the window. A little bell sounded as she pushed open the door, Izuku holding one of her hands and Katsuki secured in the purse over her shoulder. The inside of the shop was darker than she expected, the sharp scent of incense abusing her nose and the sound of water trinkling through the isles, though she couldn't see a fountain anywhere around.

"Hello dearie, what an adorable little one you have there."

Inko jumped in surprise, turning on her heel to see a tiny woman behind her.

The woman was ancient, her skin wrinkled and sagged, her eyes nothing but two pale, sightless orbs. Her silver hair was tied into a large bun atop her head, thick enough that Inko wondered if it might touch the floor if she let it down. Her yukata was set in deep orange and golds and reds. It reminded Inko of Katsuki in a way.

"I am so sorry to intrude," the mother stuttered, bowing slightly at the older woman. "I am looking for Auntie Hinko, a friend of mine sent me here. Or rather- she told me to come here if- if I needed any help."

The old woman nodded, turning quickly to lock the door and turn the sign to 'closed' before waving to Inko. "Come then, child. Let us find somewhere more comfortable for you to sit and tell me your tale. If Mitsuki has sent you to me, it must have been for good reason."

Inko didn't question how the old woman knew it was Mitsuki, instead following her through the small shop until they came to a small living area in the back of the building. A kotatsu sat in the center of the

room, a tea set already sitting atop it, two cups steaming with hot liquid. The green-haired woman wondered if Auntie Hinko had been expecting her already.

“Sit, sit. Introduce me to your little one.”

Inko did as she was asked, pulling Izuku onto her lap and turning him to face the woman who sat on the other side of the table. “This is my son Izuku,” she introduced and the boy giggled, clapping his hands. “Izuku, say hello.”

The boy grinned. “-Tie ‘nko!”

A laugh poured from the woman’s mouth, the sound like crinkled paper and yet… not unsettling. “Yes, little one. Auntie Hinko. It’s a pleasure to meet you, though I suspect you are not why we are sitting here today. You seem perfectly normal in every way,” she observed, her pale eyes turning towards Inko once more. “There is another, yes?”

Inko nodded, setting Izuku on one of the cushions beside her before opening her purse. Katsuki glared up at her as the light streamed in, a low warning growl rumbling from his chest. She clicked her tongue at him and shook her head, reaching her hands in to pluck the little fox out of his hiding hole. “Now Katsuki, don’t be rude,” she scolded him, holding him in her arms as she turned back to the other woman. “T-this is Katsuki. Mitsuki was his- ah… I’ve adopted him but- well… he’s special. As you can see and- well… um…”

Auntie Hinko hummed, interrupting her stumbling and leaning forward slightly. “Well, this is a wonder isn’t it. Come here boy, let me see you properly.”

Katsuki glared at the woman before turning his little head towards Inko as if in question. She tried not to show the worry on her face, nodding instead and placing him gently on the floor, ushering him towards the woman. The boy scoffed before trotting over to the woman. She plucked him easily from the ground and placed him on the table in front of her to have a better look, completely ignoring the surprised ‘yip’ he let out at the action.

“Oh look at you, absolutely gorgeous,” Auntie Hinko crooned, fingers tugging softly at Katsuki’s ears as the fox preened at the words. “A bit young for a full transformation I would think, but isn’t that just like you. Your- ah, that is to say Mitsuki,” she said, sparing a glance towards Inko before continuing, “was just as beautiful and just as

headstrong. She was always ahead of everyone else. It does not surprise me that you are as well."

"So-" Inko swallowed, fiddling with the strap of her purse as she glanced between the old crone and her adopted son. "Mitsuki could do this as well? Transform into- into a- a fox?"

"It was a bit different," the woman hummed, scratching behind Katsuki's ears until the little fox curled up and rested himself on the table, perfectly content and lazy with the attention. "There was much Mitsuki couldn't tell you, but I am under no such obligation, so I will tell you what I can. Then, I will help you change this little one back. Have some tea dear, this will be a long story."

A Kitsune.

Katsuki was a Kitsune, or half of one rather, as his father was, as Mitsuki had said, *pure, unabashedly human.* Not only that, but he was Kitsune *royalty*. Or as close to royal as he could get. She was still trying to wrap her head around the fact that her adopted son was in fact half fox spirit, she couldn't seem to even fathom the yokai hierarchy right now.

Fact of the matter was Katsuki was not completely human. She'd known this, deep down whenever the boy did something strange that wasn't quite explained by a quirk. But it was different hearing it. Confirming it.

Looking at the boy now, his blonde hair wild around his little face, his body curled up around Izuku as they took a nap in the living room, she could almost pretend that he was just… a little human boy.

She wasn't afraid of him, of course not. It was more that she was worried. Worried about why Mitsuki didn't want her family knowing about him. Worried about his increasing abilities and how a quirk might play into it. Worried about Katsuki in general.

But never afraid.

"Kitsune are extremely powerful spirits, mind you," Auntie Hinko had told her during their talk. *"They can be dangerous, but they can also be benevolent. I sense no darkness in your boy, though I expect him to be a handful. The fact that he is a hybrid is what concerns me most. They are not common. In fact, I know of none in recent history, so he may experience many things I will not have answers or solutions for. We will*

have to learn as he does."

The transforming was apparently something all Kitsune could do, being able to take the shape of a human- though in Katsuki's case, shifting between his two different bodies. Auntie Hinko had told her that she wouldn't expect Katsuki to be able to do it so young, as many Kitsune struggled to appear human until later in their adolescence. As such, she'd given the boy a little bracelet that fit perfectly around his tiny wrist, a ceramic leaf attached that was charmed to assist in his transformation. He would still need to learn to control it, but the charm would help remind him that he was not only a fox, would help him channel his energy into the act of physically changing back.

The disappearing was explained as more of a… blind spot. Inko was still a bit hazy on the details, but Katsuki seemed to be able to shift between her fields of vision, in that little speck of time when her mind was elsewhere and he could vanish from sight.

The nuzzling was a way of marking his scent, telling anyone else in the vicinity that Inko and Izuku were *his* and were not to be messed with.

"This will be important later, Inko, so keep it in mind. Kitsune are very possessive creatures," the woman told her as she was packing the kids up and leading her towards the door. "*Your boy will be protective of you both. Extremely so. Remember that when dealing with strangers, or if you decide to send him to school. I suspect he will be even more so over your other little one. Kitsune run in skulks, or packs as you might say. They imprint on their family, on the ones they care deeply about. They will protect them no matter what."*

"What does that mean for us?" Inko had asked, frowning down at the sleeping blonde in her arms.

"Mostly that he will be wary of strangers, perhaps even antagonistic towards them when it comes to the two of you. I suspect he will however begin to grow attuned to your moods and emotions. He will know when you're sad, worried, afraid. Katsuki has very animalistic instincts, and this is going to be a part of that. You'll need to be prepared to deal with it."

The old crone suspected he'd have many other abilities appearing as he grew older, which did nothing to settle Inko's nerves at all. Still, she was confident that they would figure it out. They would work through whatever fate or spirits or quirks had to throw at them and they would be okay.

They would be okay.

Chapter End Notes

https://mymodernmet.com/cross-fox-sam-gaby/

ˆ Link to what Katsuki's fox form looks like. As he grows older, his fox will grow bigger as well, but he'll always look like this.

On another note, I'm taking some liberties with the abilities of Kitsune. They've been known to have invisibility, but I kind of morphed that into him just being able to 'vanish' from sight using blind spots. Lore also says Kitsune usually have to use a leaf or some sort of talisman in order to transform into a human, so I used that as inspiration for Katsuki's bracelet. It'll act as a sort of anchor.
As for his mom and her family, we'll learn more about them later on! So don't you worry about that!

Thank you everyone for reading!

Chapter 2: Okay

Chapter Summary

Some more lead up towards UA.
The boys struggle with their feelings and Momma Inko is *tired*.

Chapter Notes

Ahhhhh thank you everyone for the lovely comments already! I'm going to try and keep these chapters roughly the same lengths, but I can't promise a schedule or anything. I write and upload when I'm inspired so I can't make promises. But I'll do my best!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Katsuki didn't want to go to pre-kindergarten. It was stupid and meant he'd have to be away from Mommy Inko, away from their den. He didn't want to hang out with other kids or play on playgrounds or meet the teachers.

But Mommy Inko insisted. She told him he had to because Katsuki and Izu wanted to be heroes, and they couldn't be heroes if they didn't go to school. That of course sounded stupid. Heroes didn't have to *learn* to be heroes, they just *were*. Like All Might just *was*. And if All Might could do it, then Katsuki could because Katsuki was going to be the best hero ever.

But "Even All Might went to school, Kat," she'd said, showing him and Izu a picture on her phone of their favorite hero, though much younger, wearing a weird gown and hat. "He went to UA, the best hero school in the country. And you can't get into UA without going to kindergarten." Katsuki wasn't quite sure if that was true. It sounded like one of those lies that mommies told you when they wanted you to do something, but maybe she was right. Katsuki didn't really know how *school* worked, other than that Mommy Inko taught it sometimes on her computer. So maybe she was right and he had to go if he wanted to be a hero.

Auntie Hinko seemed to think it was a good idea too, which made Katsuki feel betrayed.

But Izu seemed excited. He couldn't wait to go out and pick out their matching All Might backpacks and their various notebooks with different pro heroes on them. (Mommy Inko made sure to get ten

notebooks, one with each of the top ten on it. Five for Izu and five for him.) So he guessed it couldn't be that bad.

Mommy Inko had told him he couldn't transform in kindergarten though. Not yet at least. Which was extra stupid.

"Most kids don't get their quirks until they're four," she'd told him and he could feel the weird wave of something sad and worried flooding through her. It made him want to lean into her, press his nose into her neck in comfort, but she kept him and Izu on the couch because they had to *talk*. "What you are, Kat, it has to remain a secret, okay? When you turn four, we'll tell people that this is part of your quirk, it'll be easier that way. Safer, do you understand?"

He didn't, not really. Why did it matter if he could do things other kids couldn't? Didn't that just make him better than them? Didn't that make him special? But Mommy Inko said it with a weird voice. He didn't like the way she used the word 'safer', as if there was some danger from what he was, what he could do. So he agreed to make her happy, to keep them *safe*. And it made her smile and hug him, so he supposed it couldn't be that bad.

"If you get overwhelmed at all at school and feel like you need to transform, you have the teachers call me," she told him next, because she knew that Katsuki liked to be smaller when he was upset or uncomfortable. He liked the comfort of his heavy fur and the way his claws could dig into the dirt. "It'll never upset me, okay? Your feelings will always be important and if you need to transform, just call me and I'll come get you, okay?" She told the same thing to Izu, reminding him that if he ever felt sad or upset at school and needed her, he could call too.

Because feeling safe was important and Izu was fragile in a way that Katsuki wasn't. He didn't heal as fast as Katsuki did, couldn't run as fast or as long. He was too *human* and it scared the little fox sometimes, not that he'd tell anyone that. But it did. It scared him because Katsuki was strong and Izu wasn't so he would get hurt and Katsuki couldn't do anything to stop it.

But Izu was also smart, really smart. Smarter than any other kid in their class, even him. The teachers praised him and Mommy Inko hung his papers up on the fridge like magnets. Katsuki's papers were up there too sometimes, but he always insisted they be taken down to make more room for Izu's. His were more important. Katsuki didn't need to be smart like Izu, he could be strong instead.

And Katsuki figured school was okay. The teachers were nice, even if they seem confused about the way Katsuki acted sometimes. (Mommy Inko just told them the doctors thought he'd have a physical quirk when he got older, so that's why he acted the way he did.) The kids there were stupid, shoving toys too far into their mouths and screaming or crying. And he wasn't allowed to transform during nap time, which was extra *stupid*. But Izu was there and he smiled and giggled with the other kids and seeing him happy settled any upset in Katsuki's stomach, so he found he didn't mind school. For now at least.

Izuku decided he didn't like doctors. He didn't understand why a picture of his foot meant that he didn't get a quirk. He didn't understand why the doctor looked at him funny or why mommy started crying and Kaachan kicked the doctor in the shin. All he knew was that he couldn't be a hero. He couldn't be like All Might or Endeavor. He couldn't be like Kaachan.

That's probably what hurt the most, what made his tummy ache as he curled up in bed.

Because Kaachan was going to be a hero, that was just the truth. He had explosions in his hands! And he could turn into a fox! He was special and Izuku just knew that Kaachan was going to be the best hero ever once All Might left. But they'd always decided that they were going to be great heroes together and now that wasn't true. It wasn't true because Izuku didn't have a quirk so he couldn't be a hero. He couldn't help Kaachan get to the top, he'd only hold him back.

And he didn't want to do that.

So he stepped back from his best friend, and his mommy, and his teachers. He knew they were worried, because he wouldn't talk and he cried when he smiled… but he was *sad*. And mommy said it was okay to be sad, but he didn't know what to do now. He didn't know where to go because he'd always wanted to be a hero. *Always*. So what was he supposed to do now?

"Hey stupid, look at me!"

The greenette glanced up at his best friend, his green eyes narrowing slightly in confusion. "Kaachan, mommy says not to say bad words like that. You'll get in trouble."

The blonde didn't seem to care though as he plopped himself on Izu's

bed and crossed his arms, glaring at the other boy. “Well you’re stupid so I’m gonna call you stupid.” Izuku grumbled, looking back down in his Hero Analysis notebook (number 3) where he was sketching out different designs for Kaachan’s hero suit. “You stink of sadness,” Kaachan growled, jabbing a hard finger into Izuku’s chest and making the boy yelp in surprise, dropping his pencil. “Stop being sad or tell me what’s wrong. Is it what the doctor said?”

Izuku nodded slowly, knowing he couldn’t ever lie to Kaachan because Kaachan always knew.

“Well stop being sad then!” Kaachan scoffed, crossing his arms again and glaring. He did that a lot, Izuku noticed, the glaring. “The doctor is stupid. Who cares if you don’t have a quirk? Mommy Inko says there’s nothing wrong with that! Besides,” the blonde shrugged and tugged on one of Izuku’s curls to get his attention, “that means you’re special doesn’t it?”

Did it? Izuku frowned, head tilting slightly in confusion. “But quirks are special.”

Kaachan shook his head, getting that look on his face that he always did when he knew something that Izuku didn’t. “No, special means that it’s different than everything else, right?” He waited for the younger boy to nod before continuing. “Well everyone has quirks, and you don’t. So that means you’re special and they aren’t.”

“But you have a quirk,” Izuku argued with a pout. “I think you’re special.”

“I’m special because I’m different too,” Katsuki grinned and as he did Izuku could see the faint image of a tail behind the boy, shifting in and out of view like the air did above the car when it was hot. It was something new he’d been learning to do with Auntie Hinko, being able to show some of his fox without completely transforming. “So stop being sad because I’m not going to have a stupid sad person as my hero partner.”

Izuku jolted at that, feeling the tears prickling behind his eyes as he shook his head. “But I can’t be a hero, Kaachan!” He cried, feeling even more stupid as the tears trickled down his cheeks. He hated that he cried so much. Mommy said it was because he was sensitive to emotions, but Kaachan could smell emotions and he never cried. “I don’t have a quirk and there’s never been a hero without a quirk. You have to be the best and I can’t be the best with you.”

“Shut up!”

The loud voice had Izuku flinching backwards, but when he looked up Kaachan was leaning forward on his hands, his red eyes glaring and angry. Two soft black ears twitched atop his head and his tail was twitching angrily behind him. “K-Kaachan?”

“Shut up,” he growled again and Izuku could see the sharped teeth behind his lips. “We’re both going to be heroes and we’re going to be the best heroes in the world! Even better than All Might!” He pushed Izuku softly, making the boy lean away with a pout. “Who cares if you don’t have a quirk? You’re *smart*. You know all about heroes and villains and their quirks. You’re smarter than our teacher sometimes!”

“You can’t be a hero from just being smart, Kaachan,” he tried to argue but his friend shook his head.

“Why not? Every good hero needs someone next to them to help, someone smart. All Might had that Shield guy in America *and* he has Nighteye! They’re both super smart.” Kachaan took the notebook out of Izuku’s hand and waved it around, frustration building as his face twisted, trying to get Izuku to understand. “*This* is your quirk, dummy. This is how you’re going to be a hero. Prove to all those stupid losers out there that even someone without a quirk can be better than them!”

Mommy Inko was not happy when Katsuki got sent home for fighting on the first day of middle school. Izuku trudged in behind him, his fingers gripped tight in Katsuki’s uniform shirt, knowing that they were both in trouble because as soon as Katsuki started fighting, Izuku had to be stupid and join in. Or he tried at least.

They’d both be bruised black and purple tomorrow, he knew it.

“It’s not Kaachan’s fault, mom,” Izuku said the second they were sat on the couch, Katsuki with his arms crossed and his face twisted up in anger.

There were too many emotions around him, the scents too sharp and the feelings mixing together strangely: anger, worry, sadness, fear. He didn’t like the last one at all.

“Well,” Mommy Inko started with a sigh, sitting down in front of them with that weird patient smile she gave them when she knew they needed to talk things through. “I don’t approve of you fighting, you

both know that. But, I'm willing to hear your side of the story if you'll tell it."

And Katsuki didn't *want* to tell it, because it was stupid and it made him angry and he didn't like it when all these weird feelings bubbled up inside of him. It made him feel sick sometimes because he didn't know what to do with them. Mommy Inko said talking them through always helped, and it did, but that didn't mean he had to *like it.* So he sunk himself further into the couch and fought back the urge to transform, knowing she would be upset at him for doing so. Plus he wasn't a coward, so he wasn't going to run and hide just because he didn't want to talk about his feelings. He was just going to… sit there and not talk about his feelings.

"The other kids were being mean to him," Izuku burst, tears welling up in his eyes, the sharp scent of salt water and rain mixing into the air with the emotion. "They were talking about how-how Kaachan looks different from me and how you can't be his mom because of his hair and his quirk and how I'm quirk-quirkless. And the teachers told them he was adopted and the kids said he isn't my *real* family and-and-" he stuttered as he ranted, something he did a lot when he spoke to fast, but Mommy Inko was always patient with him. Katsuki not so much, though he tried.

"That's not why I hit him," the little fox interrupted, glaring at his best friend. "I hit him because he said Izu wasn't good enough so you adopted me because I have a quirk and he doesn't. I hit him because he was stupid."

Sharp cinnamon and spices filled his nose, a scent Katsuki had learn to associate with surprise, and he glanced up to see Mommy Inko's eyes wide and glossy. "Oh boys, you know that's not true, right?" They both frowned at her and she sighed, moving forward to take one of their hands in each of hers. "I may not be Katsuki's mom, but he will always be a part of this family no matter what. And Izuku he's never here to replace you."

Izu's frown deepened and he shook his head. "I know that. I was mad because they didn't know it."

"That's good baby. And Katuski-"

"No."

The spices grew stronger when he said it and confusion swirled through Mommy Inko like leaves and freshly cut grass. He was

shaking his head, his own anger building inside him, pressing against his skin and making his skin feel too tight against his fox. “They’re stupid, you are my mom.”

“Oh, oh Katsuki, Mitsuki-“

But he was still shaking his head, ears twitching and tail whipping back and forth from where they had appeared in his anger. He had more trouble controlling his forms when he was emotional. “No! You’re my mom. Mits’ki isn’t here. You are. You’ve always been here,” he argued, his own tears welling up in his stupid eyes and his palms going sweaty under hers. He wanted to pull away, knowing that he didn’t have full control over his quirk yet when he got mad, but he didn’t want her to think he was pulling away from *her*. “You’re *here*.”

“Kat,” she breathed, letting her own tears fall as she pulled him into a tight hug. But it wasn’t tight like his skin was tight, it was tight like a warm blanket during the winter. Tight like his favorite All Might shirt or like Izu’s arms when he snuggled into Katsuki’s bed after a nightmare. It was home. “You’ll always be my baby. Always.”

Throughout middle school, Katsuki finally started making friends that weren’t Izuku. Not that he didn’t still hang out with his best friend, it was just that Katsuki didn’t mind the stupid extras that trailed behind him sometimes, claiming he was cool because he had a strong and interesting quirk.

They meant his explosions, obviously. Even though he was allowed to now, he still didn’t show his Kitsune form often to people outside of his pack- his *family*. It felt weird having other people look at that side of him, so he kept it tucked away unless he needed it.

And they weren’t part of his pack. He may call them friends when Momma Inko asked, but he wouldn’t consider them part of his pack. He didn’t care enough about them, didn’t like the scent of their emotions on his skin. He just… tolerated them. Which was fine. It wasn’t like they liked him either. They liked his quirk.

Izuku didn’t hang out with them much. He didn’t like Katsuki’s friends, but he said he didn’t mind when the blonde wanted to go off and have fun without him. He had ‘work to do’ anyway, he’d say. Work meaning his notebooks.

Izu had an obsession with them, filling them to the brim with hero analysis: quirks, weaknesses, possible support items, areas where they

would be better or worse in. Some of them were more detailed than others, with little fold out pages and pockets for scrap notes. (All Might had his own entire notebook, though most of it was filled with battle descriptions since not much was known about his quirk on its own.) It was impressive, Katsuki had to always admit. Anytime a new hero showed up on the news, Izu had to know everything he could. And Katsuki was always eager to help.

It became their thing, following crowds towards the chaos anytime a villain showed up to make havoc, usually after school since Katsuki had training with Auntie Hinko on the weekends. Izu always wanted to watch, observe, analyze. Katsuki was happy to just stand there and see a hero in action. Momma Inko wasn't usually happy with them when they got home, ranting and raving and crying about being so close to danger, but Katsuki always assured her that they would have left if it looked too dangerous. His fox form was large enough now for Izuku to ride him if they needed a quick escape. And he was *fast*.

That was another thing they did, Katsuki's training. Auntie Hinko had been helping him learn his Kitsune side a couple of weekends a month since they'd met her. Katsuki still didn't know what her quirk was, something about awareness. All he knew was that his vanishing didn't work on her since her eyes didn't work right. Momma Inko called her blind, but Katsuki knew that wasn't the complete truth to the matter.

Still, she wasn't a Kitsune like him, but she'd known his birth mom long enough to know a lot about them. Izuku told him once that he thought the old hag was a priestess. The kind that protected spirits and the veil between worlds or something. Which would make sense if he thought about it hard enough. Which he didn't.

Izuku knew a lot more about what Katsuki was than he did. Or at least, he paid more attention. Katsuki was more focused on the control, on the abilities; Izuku was more focused on the lore and information. The nerd even had one of those notebooks just for Katsuki, filled to the brim with all kinds of random observations and information about his Kitsune side, little doodles and full blown drawings. Though this notebook was kept hidden in a drawer and wasn't allowed to be taken to class with him. (His human side with a quirk got placed carefully in the pages of his hero analysis like everyone else.)

Katsuki couldn't help the pride that would swell up in his chest anytime Izu gushed about the fox.

Halfway through their final year of middle school, Momma Inko helped them fill out their UA applications.

It was too much writing for Katsuki's liking, but worth it in the end. He wasn't planning on applying for any other schools. It was UA. That's all he wanted, so he was determined to make his application the best they'd ever seen. He and Izuku both wrote their entrance essays at least four times before they were satisfied with the final product.

Katsuki of course was going into the hero course, already preparing himself and researching what the tests were going to be like during the entrance exam. Izuku had decided he wanted to try for the support course, determined to put his analysis abilities to the test.

"*And then I can help with your costume and gear, Kaachan!"* The younger of the two had eagerly said when he'd decided. "*Support students get to work with the hero students all the time and Power Loader is one of the support teachers so I'd get to work under him which is going to be amazing! I already have an idea on how to work hearing aids into your costume since the doctor said-"* That went on for about three hours before Katsuki 'vanished' to get away from his best friend. Not that it stopped the conversation from continuing the next day.

Katsuki's application wasn't quite as in depth as Izuku's, since he was applying for the hero course, but they both had extra paperwork needed considering Izuku was quirkless and Katsuki was going into a more dangerous set of classes. Neither of them had any idea who was teaching the different hero courses, as it was usually kept under wraps until the students got there, but Izu had a pretty good idea of the various options they had.

"*Rumor has it Eraserhead started teaching a few years ago! Imagine that, an underground hero teaching hero students! And Vlad King has been teaching classes for almost a decade. He'd be cool to work under too. And Present Mic and Midnight are going to be there too, but I don't know what they teach. I'd bet something super cool. Present Mic is so powerful, he's super underrated you know and-"*

In the end Mamma Inko was tired, despite both boy's excitement, and Katsuki could feel the gentle pulse of her headache from where he sat at the kitchen table. He didn't like it.

And she was worried too, he could smell it in the air like a whisper of lemon and rotten eggs, barely contained as she filled out the required

forms and the boys wrote their essays.

He demanded they have what Izu had decided to call ‘den night’ after they were all finished. This usually consisted of them piling onto the couch, Izuku in his All Might Pajamas and Katsuki in his fox form, pressed up against Momma Inko as they watched tv. Sometimes it was another All Might documentary, but that night Katsuki had insisted on watching Momma’s dramas because it always helped calm her down and made her happy. His fox form was large enough now to take up half the couch as he draped across their laps, letting them run their fingers through his fur and feel the rumbling of his purrs through their legs. It helped the headaches, Momma Inko had told him once, and he knew from Auntie Hinko that it was a way to calm his pack. So he did it when the scents of fear or worry or anger grew too overwhelming in the air.

He didn’t tell her that she didn’t have to worry about them. He didn’t tell her that he was going to be the best hero ever and that he’d protect Izuku no matter what. She already knew that. But “moms are always worried about their kids,” she’d told them once. “It doesn’t mean I don’t believe in you. It just means I love you.”

The week before summer break changed everything, and nothing at the same time.

It wasn’t the first time Izuku and Katsuki had an argument. They had grown up together, lived in the same house for 15 years together. Of course they’d argue. But never like this, never enough where Izuku walked home on his own, stomping away with nothing but the waves of gunpowder and sour candy wafting behind him with his anger.

Katsuki couldn’t even really remember what it was about. He’d come up to see his friends mocking the younger boy after class that day, waving one of his precious notebooks out the window and over one of the school fountains where it’d no doubt be ruined if dropped. Katsuki knew his friends didn’t like Izuku. He knew Izuku didn’t like them either. But friends or not, no one was allowed to mess with his pack.

The fight itself didn’t last long, his friends knowing that they couldn’t take the blonde on, but Izu’s notebook still ended up singed and wet as it fell from the window. His so called friends ran the moment they caught sight of Katsuki’s tail swooping behind him, knowing the fox only came out when he was really mad. But he hadn’t been prepared for Izuku’s anger, hadn’t been prepared for the sharp tug in his chest

in response to the boy's tearful glare.

"*You have to stop protecting me!"*

"Don't be stupid. I'll always protect you-"

"You won't!" Those words had drawn him up short and he froze under those bright green eyes, surprised. "*We're going to a new school, Kaachan. We're going to be in different classes and you're going to be in training to be a hero. You can't keep beating people up when they make you mad, you can't keep starting fights when people bully me. You'll get kicked out before you have a chance to graduate!"*

"Then fucking learn to stand up for yourself, idiot!" The greenette flinched back when Katsuki reached for him, fingers clutching desperately at his backpack and it only served to make the blonde angrier. *"You just let them walk all over you like some sort of fucking useless thing! You're better than them, smarter than them! You need to act like it or they're never going to stop!"*

He's sure more words were exchanged but he couldn't quite remember what they were. The sharp taste of the word 'useless' was burnt into his tongue like ashes, his anger etched into his canines and pressed into his bones. He hated the feeling in his chest when he'd watched Izuku walk away, feet taking him the long way home, knowing Katsuki wouldn't follow. No matter how much he wanted to.

He didn't know about the sludge villain until later when he was suffocating on blackened ink and clawing at his own throat for release. Didn't hear that Izu had met All Might until Momma Inko had picked them both up from the police station later that night. Still didn't know why Izuku had taken all of the man's posters down from the wall and folded them extra neat into a box under his bed. Why his side of the room was void of figurines and why his All Might comforter was exchanged for one of Momma's extra green ones instead.

All Might had saved Katsuki, so why did Izuku look so upset whenever the blonde brought him up? Why was his number 13 notebook filed away on his shelf when Katsuki knew it wasn't finished yet? When Katsuki knew the symbol of peace had signed the inside of it?

What had happened that dejected his best friend so much to abandon their childhood hero? And why did it feel like Katsuki's fault?

"We're going to be the best heroes in the world," Izuku mumbled that

night when he'd curled into Katsuki's bed and shoved his face into the blonde's neck. His words were warbled and pained, and Katsuki could feel the wet tears on his skin as the body in his arms shook, but he didn't draw attention to it, only drew the boy in closer and nuzzled his nose into those green curls he loved so much. "We're going to be the best, the two of us. We'll show them that we can do it, no matter what."

"Okay."

"We're going to train all summer, both of us. I'm going to get stronger so I can protect myself," he continued, as if the blonde hadn't said anything at all, "and you're going to show me how. And we're going to graduate, and start our own agency, and you're going to be the number one hero with me beside you. And we're going to flip off everyone who said we couldn't do it."

Katsuki didn't point out the fact that no one had told them they couldn't. Sure, the kids in school and some of the teachers were hesitant about Izuku being quirkless with hero dreams, but Katsuki and Momma Inko, the ones who *mattered*, had never put him down. Never told him he couldn't do it.

Katsuki had a feeling he knew who had.

"Okay."

"Okay."

Chapter End Notes

Some more quick notes and a quick summary:
- Izuku will be going into the Support Course at UA because my baby is SMART and he deserves to show that off.
- All Might is still going to be teaching at UA, but Izuku did not take One for All when it was offered to him.
- I may or may not write a side story on how that whole thing went down if people want it?
- Since this is a ship fic, I am making a point to make sure the boys consider each other Best Friends and pack mates, but not brothers. This is also why Katsuki calls her Momma Inko instead of just mom or momma. He is fully aware that Mitsuki is his birth mother and he knows most of his past (though he hasn't learned about the letter or the details of it yet. We'll get there eventually

when plot stuff comes up.)
- Shouto will be showing up soon! Don't worry!

As always, enjoy!

Chapter 3: A Stray

Chapter Summary

Entrance exams and new friends.

Chapter Notes

We're finally getting to the points in the story where it's not so much time jumps and introspection, so it's a little more difficult to write! That being said, I hope everyone likes this chapter and thank you all SO MUCH for the amazing comments you've left me! It really keeps me inspired!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Summer training went by agonizingly slowly. Katsuki hated it. Not the training itself, but just the waiting and the time.

There was a beach not far from their house that was covered in trash that Katsuki decided would be the perfect place to train, so they spent most of their days there under the hot summer heat and the sticky sea spray. For Katsuki it was a lot of Kitsune training, hours upon hours spent jumping between piles of trash, transforming mid-air or mid-landing from one form to the other, or slinking in and out of Izuku's vision just waiting for the right moment to pounce. For Izu, he spent more time actually moving the trash, building muscle mass that he didn't have, all the while keeping his senses on alert for Katsuki's inevitable attacks.

Sometimes they'd spend a day or three sparring, no quirks allowed. Just fists and feet, bodies colliding across the sand, grunts carried away on the sea breeze. Izu did research late into the night on different fighting styles and techniques which he'd show Katsuki the next day, his green eyes eager with excitement and Katsuki's muscles coiled and ready to spring.

It was rare for the younger boy to win a spar. His technique was often better than Katsuki's, but the other was stronger, more vicious. More often than not they'd tie, or Izuku would end up pinned on the ground, his face just an inch away from the incoming tide as Katsuki cackled above him. On occasion though, Izuku would get a leg over on the blonde and got to mark a victory in his training notebook (because

yes, of course he had a notebook for training).

“Get off me, you damn nerd!”

Izuku laughed from where he sat cross legged on top of Katsuki, shaking his head. “I won, Kaachan!”

“You fucking cheated is what you did,” the blonde argued, thrashing under him but not launching the greenette off. He could if he wanted to, they both knew he was the stronger of the two, but instead he grunted in defeat and crossed his arms under his head to keep his face out of the sand. “You said you fucking showed me everything you learned last night. That thing you did with your feet was fucking cheating. You didn’t show me that.”

The body on his back rocked with laughter and shifted. With a grunt, Katsuki turned his head and glared at the face that peered down at him. “Technically I learned it this morning. I saw that new Mika Jiro music video and she did this fancy footwork and I thought maybe I could work it into a fight. It worked didn’t it? Though it was kind of hard to do on the sand, I almost lost my footing a few times. I practiced it a little while you were doing your morning laps,” he babbled, hands moving excitedly around him, not seeming bothered at all by the fact that he was literally sitting *on top of Katsuki*. “I’m kind of surprised it actually worked!”

“Tch,” the blonde scoffed, rolling his eyes and planting his hands flat on the sand beneath him. It shifted slightly under the movement, but held firm enough. “Hold on, nerd, you’re my weight training today.”

“Huh? What do you- WHAAA- KAACHAN!”

Izuku squawked when Katsuki lifted into his first push up, the extra weight of Izuku on top of him a bit awkward, but not too much as he lowered himself back towards the ground and up again.

They spent the rest of the summer like that, alternating between fighting and training and working out. On the days they were too sore to do much, Izuku would challenge Katsuki to a game of ‘totally-not-hide-and-seek’ where he’d find somewhere to hide while Katsuki tried to find him. Each time he made it increasingly more difficult to find him, slipping his thin body through piles of trash, covering his scent in oil from a rundown truck, hiding inside a rusted freezer. It was a way to train Katsuki’s senses, he’d explained, both in and out of his fox form.

“You’re going to be a hero, Kaachan! That means you’ll have to do rescue scenarios too,” Izuku told him after the first night when they’d gathered at the table for dinner, freshly showered and starving. “We already know you can smell emotions and stuff, but think about how useful it’d be if you could use it for hero work too! Someone could be stuck under piles and piles of rubble with no one to hear them, but you could literally sniff them out!”

Katsuki scoffed around his mouthful of spicy uudon and rolled his eyes. “I’m going to be a combat hero, stupid,” he argued. “There are sidekicks and rescue heroes who deal with that kind of stuff.”

“Don’t be too hasty, Katsuki,” Momma Inko scolded as she sat beside them, her own bowl of food held gently in her hands. “All Might has rescued a lot of people in his time. You remember Izuku’s favorite documentary, he came out of that burning building with people in both arms! Heroes are supposed to be able to do anything they have to to save lives. Isn’t that right?”

And of course he couldn’t argue that. So they worked on rescue training as well. Nothing too crazy since Momma Inko wouldn’t let them and they weren’t technically allowed to use their quirks outside of school, but they did what they could on that old beach during the summer.

By the time they were done, the sand was all that was left, the trash hauled away or broken down or destroyed.

And the boys were ready for school

Robots. They were fighting robots.

Izuku knew that the physical entrance exam for UA was going to be crazy, probably dangerous- no, *definitely* dangerous- but he hadn’t quite expected robots. (The analyst part of his brain couldn’t help but think it wasn’t really fair for those who didn’t have combat quirks, but who was he really to question *UA High*?)

The practical exam had gone by without a hitch, though Izuku had been separated from Kaachan the moment they got to campus. Apparently hero course students and support course students had different tests so they went their separate ways. The greenette didn’t like it necessarily, he wasn’t really used to be away from Kaachan for an entire *day*, especially when they were both anxious and high on nerves, but he supposed he’d have to get used to it once they got in.

Lucky for him, since he and Kaachan came together they let him into the viewing rooms to watch the physical exam, not that it helped his anxiety any. The blonde was handling himself perfectly well, the robots not even landing a scratch on him, but just the sight of him in battle was nerve wracking.

And also awe-inspiring.

Izuku had seen his best friend's quirk plenty of times, of course he had, but seeing it in action was a whole other matter.
Seeing *Kaachan* in action was a whole other matter. He was almost graceful in the battlefield, light on his feet and energetic, his sharp grin practically splitting his face in half. He didn't use his fox form, claimed he didn't need it to win, but Izuku could still see the Kitsune in him. Others wouldn't, but Izuku knew what to look for, what to see. Each time the blonde twisted midair, feet planted on the side of a building to launch himself up and up and up; each time his head would tilt in a seemingly random direction and his nose would twitch like he was catching a scent. It was incredible to watch. Like seeing a wild cat hunting its prey.

Beautiful.

"Excuse me, but you're mumbling."

Izuku squawked and jumped at the quiet voice, pin wheeling his arms wildly to keep his balance as he turned towards the new voice.

"Ah sorry! I do that… a lot…"

Now, Izuku had never really been one for crushes. Sure, there had been a few boys or girls in school that he'd thought cute, but they were always fleeting thoughts, overwhelmed by his interest in heroes or quirks or Kaachan. Which, probably wasn't super healthy, but he was also in middle school. He didn't have time for romance when he was trying to keep up with his best friend, trying to get into the most prestigious hero school in the country.

That being said, the boy next to him nearly made his heart stop.

He was gorgeous, the kind of gorgeous that Izuku could see on the cover of magazines or in one of mom's dramas. He was tall, about the same height as Kaachan with red and white hair split down the middle. It was his eyes though that had Izuku practically melting. (If he thought about it enough, Izuku might have realized that it was always the eyes that drew him in. Like Kaachan's eyes with their deep

crimson, little golden flakes sprinkled within if you looked deep enough.) This boy though, his eyes were different. Literally. One was a cool, blue, the same shade as the soft, expensive looking sweater he wore and hidden behind a dark red scar that spanned across the side of his face closest to Izuku. The other eye was a dark grey, like storm clouds on the horizon. Izuku had never seen anything like it before, though logically he knew people had different coloured eyes sometimes. He wondered if it was a quirk thing or if maybe they were just natural-

"I was born with them."

Izuku blinked, hand raising quickly to cover his mouth and he could feel the heat rising to his cheeks. "Ah! I'm sorry, was I mumbling again?"

"Yes, about my eyes," the boy answered with a nod. "My hair is natural too. Most people ask about that next."

"Ah-" Izuku gave an awkward chuckle, rubbing the back of his neck as he fought back a blush. "Sorry, I don't mean to be rude. I'm just excited about the exams and such and I get a bit in my head about things when I'm anxious or excited so I mumble a lot. See? I'm doing it again. Gosh-" *Way to go, Izuku. If Kaachan was here he'd be laughing his ass off*. "Um, anyway. I'm Midoriya Izuku, are you here to support someone too?"

The boy didn't shake the hand that Izuku held out to him, instead turning his gaze back towards the large screen in the room to watch the exam. "No." He said simply.

A bit unsure, Izuku left his hand raised for a few moments before lowering it back to his side. Something in his stomach churned at the rejection but he covered it quickly with an eager smile. "Oh, then are you here for the testing? Are you trying to get into UA too? You must have done the support exam then, or general studies? I only assume that since you're not out there doing the physical exam for hero studies-"

"You talk a lot."

Izuku's teeth clacked as he shut his mouth, fighting the urge to pout at the words. "Oh, yeah, sorry. Kaachan tells me that all the time."

They fell into an uneasy silence, eyes turned towards the screen where Kaachan was busy stealing the points from a man with engines in his

legs. It was almost seemless for Izuku to fall back into analysis mode, eyes eagerly drinking up any quirk he could see on screen, fingers itching for the notebook in his backpack as he tried to memorize everything he saw. No doubt Kaachan would tell him once they figured out who would be in his class, but he didn't trust the blonde to pay enough attention to satisfy his obsessive need for information.

He jumped slightly at a gentle tap to his shoulder, turning to see the dual haired boy staring down at him, his head tilted slightly and eyebrows furrowed.

"Y-Yes?"

"What is a Kaachan?"

Izuku blinked at the question, trying to recall how much time had passed between their conversation and the boy's question. Kaachan had taken down at least three more robots, so it had to be a decent amount. "Um- he's- he's my best friend. That one, see?" He pointed to the screen just as a streak of blonde hair and a flash of an explosion took down another bot. "He's going for the hero course, he's super strong and is going to be the number one hero one day. Which will be super easy for him, especially with two quirks. I tested into the Support Course, so they let me come in here and cheer him on while I wait."

Apparently satisfied with the answer, the boy turned away again, hands folding politely behind his back. After another few minutes, he spoke again, this time quieter and almost… unsure. "I'm Todoroki Shouto. I am in the hero course as well."

The name sent a jolt through the shorter boy and he struggled not to react immediately. He knew the family name. Of *course* he knew it. Who didn't? Todoroki. Todoroki Shouto, youngest son of Todoroki Enji. Better known as Endeavor. The *number two hero.* Izuku was standing next to the son of the *number two hero*. Holy crap. Holy crap.

Kaachan was never going to believe him.

Still, Izuku nearly had to physically rearrange his face as to not show his shock. Surely the boy got enough attention as it was, and he didn't seem exactly comfortable with telling Izuku that information. So he would keep his fanboy brain under control for the time being so he didn't accidently scare the boy away.

"Well it's nice to meet you, Todoroki! If you don't mind me asking,"

he said carefully, glancing at the boy from the corner of his eye, looking for any sign of further discomfort. “Why aren’t you taking the physical exam?” Blue and grey eyes blinked in surprise, turning away from the screen quickly to glance down at Izuku. Izuku wondered if Kaachan would smell spices in the air, what flavors they might be and how sharp they would be against his tongue. “You uh- you don’t have to answer that if you don’t want,” he laughed, waving his hands in front of him a bit wildly. “Sorry, that was probably intrusive!”

“No,” Todoroki answered, the gentle hint of a smile tugging at the stern boy’s lips. “My apologies. You simply… surprised me. I am used to people recognizing my name and asking about it. I have already been accepted into the course so there was no need to test,” he informed the greenette. “I, along with a few others, got in on recommendation.”

“Oh, yeah, I guess that makes sense,” Izuku nodded, not having known that it was something even allowed. “And I recognized your name,” he said with a shrug, “but like, you may be Endeavor’s son, but that’s not all you are. Plus, I figured you get recognized enough. I didn’t need to add to that.”

Todoroki blinked again and even *Izuku* could practically taste the spiced shock in the air. “I… am unsure of how to react in this situation,” he said matter-of-factly and Izuku couldn’t help the giggle that slipped from his lips. “Now you are laughing at me.”

“No, no, you’re just-“ he cut himself off before the word ‘*cute*’ could escape his lips and he covered his mouth with his hand. “Sorry. I’m not used to people being as awkward as I am.” He rocked a bit on his feet, weighing something in the back of his mind before making a decision. “Well Todoroki, if you’d like… we can watch the rest of the exam together! I’d really like to hear your opinions on the other students testing in. You have a unique perspective that I don’t, so it’d be fun!”

Todoroki’s face twisted slightly as he glanced at the chairs Izuku motioned to, but Izuku was patient. He’d learned a long time ago that he had to be patient with some people. Mom always said Kaachan struggled with expressing his emotions, so sometimes he had to be patient with the blonde until he figured out what he needed to say. So Izuku waited, watching the screen to distract himself from the slightly awkward feeling settling over him.

“I… did not come here to make friends,” Todoroki said carefully,

slowly, like he was trying not to let something important slip on accident.

“Then why did you?”

The taller boy hummed, head tilting again, though he didn’t face Izuku. “I am here to be a hero.”

Green curls bounced wildly as Izuku nodded, his shoulders shrugging. “I don’t see why you can’t do both!”

“Oi, dumbass, you better have watched the whole thing instead of writing in that stupid notebook!”

Izu jumped like he always did when Katsuki yelled out to him, head popping up over a couch in the viewing room and a bright smile spreading over his dumb, freckled face. His eyes were wild, a look the blonde knew meant he was about to start babbling for *hours and hours* without stopping, and his notebook was clenched eagerly in his fingers, no doubt filled to the brim with new potential heroes and their quirks.

It was the stranger next to his best friend however that drew Katsuki up short.

The guy was hot, not that Katsuki would admit it or anything. He smelled like burning driftwood and freshly fallen snow, not something Katsuki was likely going to forget any time soon. It was drastically different from the sharp scent of ozone and lightning that Izu always gave off, or the gentle smell of green tea and parchment paper that Momma Inko had drifting after her anytime she walked by. The area around his eye however smelt darker, like it gave off waves of blackened energy that Katsuki couldn’t quite grasp.

(That was something new that the Kitsune hybrid had started noticing since the summer started… the strange waves of energy he sensed around people. Not quite emotions, not quite smells. Almost like, memories he could feel but not access. He hadn’t brought it up to Auntie Hinko yet though, not without knowing more about it.)

“Kaachan! Holy moly you were so good! Todoroki and I watched the whole thing and you got so many points! And when you took down that zero pointer to save the gravity girl? That was so brave!” The younger of the three cheered, sitting up on his knees and leaning over the back of the couch, hands waving wildly around him. “You scored

the highest out of everyone! Which of course you did, I never expected anything else, but seeing you fighting was so *cool*!"

"Tch," Katsuki scoffed, rolling his eyes. "Of course I was the best. Cheeks shouldn't have been stuck under the rocks. She was practically begging me to save her," he said off-handedly, stepping up towards the back of the couch so he towered over the other two boys. "Who's your new friend?"

Izuku perked up, like he'd forgotten someone was even sitting beside him and grinned. "Oh! This is Todoroki Shouto. He got into the hero course on recommendation, but he might be in your class!"

"I don't know about that," Todoroki chimed in with a frown. "There are two different classes, and roughly twenty students in each class-"

"Which means there's a 50/50 chance you'll be in the same one," Izuku interrupted. "He was helping me figure out exactly how the gravity girl's quirk works! We didn't get to see a lot of her, or the kid with the steel skin, so we were speculating."

"You were speculating," Todoroki corrected, but much to Katsuki's amusement, Izuku continued on as if he'd never heard him.

"Do you think mom would let him come by for dinner? We can drive you home after-" he said eagerly, turning to the half-and-half bastard now and something strange twisted in Katsuki's stomach when the boy blinked at his best friend. "She makes the best Katsudon and she promised us she'd make some for dinner tonight because she knew we'd do great on our tests! Kaachan likes his extra spicy, but she always makes regular Katsudon too because I can't handle the spice and-"

With false annoyance, Katsuki slapped a hand over the younger boy's mouth and groaned. "For fuck's sake, Izu, you'll make him deaf with how much you're talking. Maybe he doesn't want to come home with us. Besides, I'm sure he has cooks or someone to make food for him that's better than anything he can get with us."

Burnt oranges filled his senses and he met Izuku's glare easily, though he could feel the pout on his lips under his palm before the boy pushed his hand away. "First of all, get your hands off my mouth, they taste like burnt caramel," he grumbled, crossing his arms. "And second of all, don't hate on mom's cooking like that! She's a great cook!"

“I’m better,” Katsuki shrugged, which was only partially true. He was only better because Momma Inko taught him and he enjoyed it enough to learn more on his own.

“Then *you* can make Katsudon for dinner,” Izuku said with an air of finality that Katsuki found both amusing and annoying. “How about it, Todoroki? This way we all have friends when we start school and we don’t have to do that awkward meet new people thing! Kat doesn’t like being nice to people, so it’ll be nice for him to have a friend in class since I won’t be there to calm him down.”

Offended, the Kitsune squawked, smacking the boy on the back of the head with a growl. “Oi, fuck off, nerd! I don’t need a babysitter!”

The other boy was staring at them with a weird look on his face and the scent of frost grew in the room. Katsuki’s nose wrinkled in distaste, which of course Izu noticed because he frowned, head tilting a bit in confusion before he followed the blonde’s gaze.

“Oh, I mean, you don’t have to if you don’t want to, Todoroki," he said quickly, noticing the look on the other's face. "Please don’t feel like I’m like- pushing you or something. It’s just- well it’d be nice to be friends is all,” he finished lamely, his shoulders slumping.

Mismatched eyes turned to Katsuki then and the blonde shrugged, lips twisting into a sneer. “I don’t fuckin’ care. Come or don’t. But I’m hungry and sore and I’m tired of sitting around so make up your fucking minds or I’m leaving without you.”

And with that, he turned on his heel and stomped away.

“Mom! We’re home!”

“I’m in the kitchen!” A woman’s voice called back, soft and kind.

Shouto paused in the doorway and toed off his shoes, nodding in thanks as Izuku passed him a pair of guest slippers and he slid them on. The home itself was nice, not as traditional as his own, much more modern, but also more… homely. Photos were hung randomly along crème walls, jackets and bags were slung messily onto the rack beside the front door, and it looked much more lived in than the Todoroki household did. Then again, it was only him and Fuyumi left at home and Endeavor made it a point that they keep clean and out of the way.

"The nerd brought home a stray," the older Midoriya said with a huff,

shoving his hands in his pockets and slumping his shoulders the moment he stepped into the house, like the weight of the world had just been lifted off of them. "Not even excepted into the school yet and he's already making friends."

A bit unsure of what to do, Shouto followed the two boys down the short entrance hall and into a small kitchen. It looked even more homely than the entrance way, with cute green tile and a matching fridge that was covered in drawings and photos and magnets. A short, sort of plump woman stood at the stove, wrapped in a messy apron. She was no doubt the younger Midoriya's mother, with her green hair and green eyes, though he couldn't see any of the eldest in her.

"I'm adopted, asshole," the blonde grunted, rolling his eyes from where he stood next to the woman at the stove. He didn't face Shouto, but the dual coloured student knew he was speaking to him.

"Katsuki!"

"What? He wasn't going to ask and I could practically smell his confusion!"

"You know I don't like your language or your attitude, especially in front of guests," Mrs. Midoriya scolded, handing him over a wooden spoon. "Finish the dinner dear and I'll go introduce myself." Shouto watched with a blank expression as the blonde grumbled but did as he was told. Meanwhile, the green haired woman turned towards him and offered a blinding smile that he recognized almost immediately. "And look at you! The boys have never brought friends home before! Well, Katsuki did a few times but never for dinner! I'm Midoriya Inko, it's a pleasure to meet you!"

Minding his manners, Shouto bowed deeply at the waist. "My name is Todoroki Shouto. I am sorry for dropping in unannounced, ma'am."

The woman all but squealed as Shouto straightened and he... didn't really know what to do about that, but she smiled and waved her hands wildly in another strangely familiar gesture before giggling. "Oh and he's polite too! What a sweetheart! Did you take the test with Katsuki or Izuku?"

"No!" Izuku chimed in eagerly, reaching a hand out like he wanted to grab onto Shouto's arm before pausing slightly and waving instead. "He got in on recommendation, mom! Which is super cool! I didn't even know they *did* that or Kaachan might have tried. *And* he has two quirks! Just like Kaachan!"

The blonde in question tensed, which was interesting, those deep red eyes turning on Shouto immediately before narrowing. Mrs. Midoriya blinked as well, seemingly surprised at the information. Shouto supposed that was fair, most people were surprised when they found out. Dual Quirk wielders were incredibly rare, he in fact was surprised to learn that the so called 'Kaachan' was one as well, especially since he'd shown no sign of it during the entrance exam. Then again, Shouto didn't use both of his either, so he supposed he couldn't judge the other boy for it.

"Sorry, was that supposed to be a secret?"

Shouto shrugged. "If it was, I wouldn't have told you," he said, because it was true.

"Well, why don't you sit down and tell us a little about yourself. If you got in on recommendations, I suppose you're trying for the hero course, yes?"

And Shouto did as he asked, answering most of the questions the Midoriya's threw at him, which were all surprisingly trivial. They spoke about the testing as well, Izuku babbling on for most of the dinner about the various quirks he saw, and Shouto chimed in when he thought apropriate. Katsuki practically preened when he was praised for his 130 points he scored during the exam, the highest out of everyone there. (Though Shouto knew he would have been highest even if he hadn't gotten the extra rescue points at the end.) There was no doubt the blonde was going to get in.

They were... nice, he decided, somewhere between his second bowl of Katsuki's (absolutely mouth watering) Katsudon and the four of them migrating into the living room to watch a new All Might special on the television. They were nice in a way he didn't quite understand, a way he wasn't quite sure how to deal with. Fuyumi was nice like Mrs. Midoriya, but she walked around the house like Shouto was fragile, she ignored the arguing, and stared too long at family photos that didn't seem to matter anymore. Mrs. Midoriya didn't seem like that kid of person.

She was kind, gentle. She didn't once ask about Shouto's scar, hadn't even spared it another glance past the first notice. He wasn't used to that. She loaded the extra food into a container and pushed it into his hands to take home for later, ignoring all arguments otherwise. And... she asked him to come back, offered him an open door whenever he wanted just because the boys said they were friends.

Endeavor would have never done that.

And the boys were okay too, he guessed, Izuku and Katsuki (which they insisted he call them since 'the Midoriyas' was too confusing). Izuku was a timid thing, excitable and energetic but not to the point of annoyance, like a bunny he thought. And Katsuki was the same but in a different kind of way, a more feral way. He wasn't timid necessarily, more like wary around Shouto, like he wasn't used to others being in his space. And he was loud and brash to a point of rudeness, but Shouto found he didn't quite mind it. It was easy to ignore, not that the blonde liked *that* at all. He reminded Shouto of a cat, or maybe a fox or one of those small yappy dogs with too much hair and a voice louder than their body.

By the time Shouto finally left, he had two new phone numbers in his cell phone for the first time since he'd gotten it. He had two friends for... well the first time in his entire life.

And he wasn't quite sure what that meant, but he thought... maybe he liked that.

Chapter End Notes

Quick update:
with this chapter I realized I needed to update tags because I forgot about the abuse and stuff. So keep an eye on tags! I won't describe any of Enji's abuse in the story, but it may come up later when the boys start growing closer. Plus we'll be discussing triggers and boundaries and such later as well. Enjoy everyone!

Chapter 4: Heritage

Chapter Summary

> Katsuki discovers something new and Auntie Hinko spills some tea.

Chapter Notes

> Oh my GOSH you guys are going to make me cry with all your amazing comments and support! Thank you all so much, I'm absolutely loving this series and I can't wait for you guys to read more of it! I'm trying to pump out chapters while I have inspiration right now, so that's why there isn't a set schedule. Sorry for those of you who like regular updates. But deadlines like that just stress me out and I never end up getting things done, so I just upload as I can.
> That being said, enjoy this chapter! Like I said before we're slowing down a lot on time skips so chapters from now on are going to be pretty linear and close together- though I'll have a few time skips throughout just so it stays interesting. Anyway, enjoy!
>
> TRIGGER WARNING: Teeny tiny trigger warning for this chapter about Shouto's abuse, but it's like, barely mentioned. So just *be aware*

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Maybe he just doesn't text much. Leave the kid alone, you'll scare him away."

"But Kaachan! You liked him too, didn't you? You wouldn't have let him come over for dinner if you didn't!"

"The fuck does that mean?"

Izuku rolled his eyes, glancing up from his phone to stare at the blonde next to him on the bus. They were both dressed in their new UA uniforms, though Kaachan had already conveniently 'lost' his tie and Izuku was sure his wasn't tied correctly. The excitement was almost palpable in the air and Izuku had a mind to ask what it tasted like. Kaachan wouldn't show it, but Izuku could see it in the way his eyes watched the streetline from the window, searching the horizon for the tell tale rise of UA in the distance. Meanwhile, Izuku was busy practically bouncing in his seat, eager to start this new trek in their

adventure.

They'd exchanged numbers with Shouto before mom dropped him off at home the night he came for dinner. Izuku had even started a group chat for them, though the other boy had yet to respond. Which was fine... Izuku wasn't disappointed. It'd just been a week and a half since the entrance exams and he was maybe a little worried that the boy had decided he didn't want to be friends after all.

"Well, you're a little protective, Kaachan," the greenette answered with a shrug. "You don't usually like people coming to the house if you don't know them. And let's be honest, you don't really have friends other than me, not anymore at least. So I was kind of surprised you agreed to let Todoroki come over at all."

The blonde sneered, his sharp canines glinting in the morning sun. "That doesn't mean I like him!"

"But you do."

It wasn't a question. The green haired boy knew his best friend better than anyone in the entire world, probably even better than himself. He knew how Katsuki acted around people he liked and people he didn't. The kitsune might not *know* he liked Shouto yet, but Izuku knew he did. The fact that *he* was the one to suggest exchanging numbers told Izuku all he needed to know. And the younger boy was happy, ecstatic even, that Kaachan had liked Shouto enough to agree to even a tiny semblance of friendship. Because Izuku didn't have many of those- friends that is. In fact, he had one. And it was Kaachan.

He'd grown up quirkless. It wasn't an easy burden to bear. Kaachan made it easier, fought off the bullies he could and encouraged Izuku to be better, to prove them wrong. It eased the weight that sat on the younger boy's chest most days. Still, he'd never quite gotten the hang of meeting new people, of making friends. Kaachan was protective and being quirkless meant Izuku didn't have many prospects in the first place. Not that he'd blame Kaachan for his lack of friends, it was just that... well, he trusted the blonde. And if the blonde didn't like someone, then he probably had a good reason for it. That's all. So the moment there was any sign of just *tollerance* towards Shouto, Izuku latched on like a koala, afraid to let go for fear the other boy would disappear.

He might still. Izuku knew Shouto wasn't much for friends either, he'd

told him as such when they'd met. And a part of him was still anxious about the fact that he didn't have a quirk and how the dual haired student would react when finding out. Since he was going into the support course, quirks weren't nearly as important to his actual schooling, not personal quirks at least. But Shouto was going to be a *hero*. In Izuku's experience, those kinds of people usually cared.

Then again, Shouto had spent the entire entrance exam and dinner with them and had never once asked what Izuku's quirk was so... maybe he wouldn't care.

"Will you stop worrying? It's making me nauseous. I can't be nauseous on the first day of school."

Izuku jumped slightly, turning back to face the kitsune beside him with wide eyes. "Huh?"

Kaachan glanced at him from the corner of his eye, his expression annoyed, though the hand he brought up to ruffle through the greenette's hair said otherwise. "I can smell the thoughts in your head, dumbass. You're worrying about the half-and-half kid. Don't. If he doesn't want to be friends, you can't force him. If he does, then don't smother him. Kid was as fucking awkward as a bag of rocks, he probably doesn't even know how to text."

The words eased some of the anxiety in Izuku's stomach and he sighed, leaning into the hand in his hair just enough to show Kaachan he appreciated the gesture, but not enough to draw attention to it. The blonde would pull away if he did.

"I guess you're right. Maybe he's just as nervous as I am! Plus, we're all going to UA! Maybe he's just anxious about a new school, or he's getting ready, or something," he rationalized, nodding along with his words. Kaachan clicked his tongue but didn't reply otherwise. His words though reminded Izuku of something. "Oh! What does it smell like?"

Kaachan frowned, looking away from the window to stare down at Izuku. "Hah?"

"You said you can smell my thoughts or anxiety or whatever. What's it smell like?"

Red eyes scrunched up in consideration, his nose wrinkling and lips twisting as he thought. "It's different depending on the person, but most have the same underlying scent. Like shock or surprise usually

smells like spices, but the spices might be different whether it's you or momma Inko or some rando on the street," he shrugged and paused. They'd talked about this kind of thing before, but the blonde got uncomfortable getting too deep into the emotional abilities that came with his heritage, so Izuku usually had to get the information in bits and pieces. But he waited patiently for the other to continue, fighting the urge to pull a notebook out to write it all down. He'd be sure to remember. "Anxiety is usually more sour. Like expired milk, at the base anyway. Yours always feels like it's mixed with..." his head tilted back and forth for a moment before he hummed. "Mixed with sour candy. Momma Inko's smells like it's mixed with rubbing alcohol."

Izuku found his own face screwing up at that, mind conjuring a memory of curdling milk unwillingly.

The blonde beside him snorted and tugged at a lock of green hair. "Exactly. So fuckin' stop being anxious. Go back to being excited, that was fine."

"Oh! What's that one smell like?"

Kaachan groaned and rolled his eyes again. "Like cotton candy ice cream. Are you going to keep asking me about emotional scents or are you going to turn around and look at UA because I can see it through the window which means you owe me lunch because I saw it first."

"A quirk assessment? Does Eraserhead not have your quirks on file?"

Katsuki grunted as he plopped himself at an empty table, Izu sitting on the bench across from him with a small frown. The kid had been ecstatic when he found out their lunches lined up so they could still eat together and catch up on what was going on, regardless of the fact that they literally *lived together*. Katsuki wasn't necessarily complaining, he was just sour about the assessment... and it's results...

"Fuckin' asshole threatened to expel whoever came in last," he snorted, rolling his eyes as he dug into his backpack, pulling out two bentos before handing one across the table to the green haired boy. "Actually did it too, some little purple perv. Not sure if he got expelled because of the test or the fact that he was bein' gross to all the girls in class though." A grimace twisted onto Katsuki's face and he stabbed his rice angrily. "Stupid little prick almost got *me* expelled."

Izu's head snapped up at that and he blinked, chopsticks hung halfway to his mouth. "*WHAT?* Kaachan, it's the first day!"

"Yeah well- he was being a pervy little shit! What was I supposed to do?!"

"Kaachan! What did you do on the *first day* that nearly got you expelled?!"

A familiar scent wafted up behind him, surrounding him on all sides except the front where Izuku sat, and the blonde tensed, ready for the voice before it even spoke. "He threatened to kill him," Todoroki said nonchalantly, as if he wasn't outing Katsuki's homicidal tendencies to the whole cafe. "In his defense, Mineta was trying to look up the girl's skirts when Mr. Aizawa wasn't looking. Mido- um... Katsuki- noticed and kicked him across the room before threatening him. It was an impressive display."

"Todoroki! So you *are* in Kaachan's class then?" Izuku asked eagerly, and Katsuki had to lift his bento closer to his face as he ate to avoid the sharp scent of sugar and ice cream that invaded his senses.

The half-and-half bastard nodded, fingers tapping at the tray in his hands as he glanced at the seat beside Katsuki like he was expecting some sort of invitation. And while the blonde wasn't going to deny the seat, he wasn't going to go offering it either. He didn't need to apparently, as Izu offered it as easily as he would have offered it to Katsuki. And that was... weird. Izu had always been friendly, but he was usually rather shy around new people. Especially attractive people. The fact that he so easily accepted Todoroki, like they hadn't only met once, made something sour twist in Katsuki's stomach. Something he couldn't quite put his finger on. The thing was though, it didn't feel... bad, necessarily. It wasn't jealousy. He couldn't taste the burnt mold in the back of his throat that normally came with jealousy. It was something different. Something he didn't know.

The weird aura coming from Todoroki's scar sure as hell didn't help either. Katsuki was sitting on the side closest to the discoloured skin, closest to the strange black energy radiating off of it. It was distracting- distracting in a way that his abilities hadn't been since they first started appearing, not unless the emotion was too extreme to ignore. Still, he'd never seen anything like it, and it was hard to investigate without seeming like an ass who wouldn't stop staring.

It smelt... dirty. Tasted like something rotten and painful on the back of his tongue. He remembered something similar when Izu had broken his arm as a kid. The sharp taste of rot that came from the appendage. There had been no black smoke-like aura to accompany the injury

though, not like this. If Izu's injury was a grey-ish white colour, Todoroki's was pitch black.

If Katsuki focused enough on it, drew the scent deep into his lungs, he could almost hear the screams that came from a tiny boy on his kitchen floor- fingers clawing, kettle screeching, hands holding him down-

"-aachan? Kaachan!"

SNAP.

Katsuki jumped at the sound of his chopsticks snapping between his fingers, his claws digging sharp into his palm and knocking him back into the cafe they sat in. He blinked the odd sensations away, finding the other two boys staring at him, one with concern and the other with mild interest. The blonde took a few seconds to set his broken chopsticks down and take a breath, desperately clinging to the scent of ozone that wafted off of Izuku instead of the rotten wood and snow.

"Kaachan, do we need to leave?"

"If you get overwhelmed at all at school and feel like you need to transform, you have the teachers call me."

But that was weak, to leave school on the first day just because he let himself get overwhelmed by some fucking smells. "No," he growled, the sound deeper than it should have been and digging into his throat like gravel. Izu frowned at the answer, but was patient as always, waiting for Katsuki to speak, to explain. "I'm fine. I'm fucking fine just- switch seats with me. Now."

He didn't bother explaining why, he didn't need to. Izuku was up and moving before Katsuki had even pushed himself to his feet. He didn't spare Todoroki a glance as he sat across from them, only pulled an extra set of sticks from his bag and began shoveling his food into his mouth like he was starving.

The scent was still there, the temptation to let that smoke draw him back in, but it wasn't as bad now. It wasn't as all encompassing, not with Izuku's scent lingering and the smell of rice and seaweed so close to his nose.

Thankfully, Izuku didn't dwell on his strange behavior, either because he was used to it by now, or because he knew Katsuki didn't want to talk about it. He wasn't sure. But the conversation shifted easily,

sliding right back into the quirk assessment, as Izuku eagerly soaked up any information Todoroki would give him on the quirks of people in their class. He was most interested in the gravity chick, something about her being able to potentially manipulate space time, and the possibilities of the rich girl with the ponytail. He didn't miss the fact that they skipped over the scores of everyone, especially since fucking half-and-half beat him and he was still sour over it. Lucky for them, he couldn't stomach the idea of arguing about it right then, so he let Izuku carry the conversation as usual.

Listening to him babble as Todoroki chimed in with his own theories- though less often -was a good distraction. Maybe Todoroki wasn't so bad after all and they could completely forget about Bakugou's weird freakout.

Midoriya Katsuki was a handful. Hinko had decided this the moment he'd curled up on her table that first day she'd met him. He was rambunctious, angry, volatile. His attitude left much to be desired and she was sure the only reason he had any manners whatsoever were because of Inko.

He was, as Hinko remembered, exactly like Mitsuki.

He was also, unfortunately, an unknown. Though she'd been training with him since he was a toddler, he was constantly surprising her. Whether it be with his confidence, his stubbornness, or the fact that he was incredibly adept at pretty much anything he tried. His skill at adapting and using his abilities was impressive, and Hinko knew he would be a force to be reckoned with when he grew older, if he wasn't already. He even had the mind for strategizing. He knew how to get to his goals, he knew what he wanted and what to do to get there. If something stood between him and that goal, he figured out a way around it- sometimes he had one already.

She was sure young Izuku had something to do with that. The boy was an observer by nature, a sponge soaking up any and all information he could gather, figuring different ways to use different things. No doubt the boys would stay up for hours and hours on end figuring out new ways to utilize Katsuki's quirk or abilities.

It had, however, been quite a long time since he'd developed a new ability. In fact, he'd only ever had the three since he was a child: vanishing, transforming, and enhanced sensory awareness. It'd been so long since he'd discovered anything new that Hinko had almost

expected that to be it. She thought maybe, just maybe, this little hybrid was as much as he was going to be, that Mitsuki had no reason to fear the boy or his safety.

Yet like she said, he was constantly surprising her.

"Tell me about lunch."

Katsuki grumbled from where he sat across from her, his chin resting heavy on his hand, elbow placed impolitely on her kotatsu. Izuku was huddled up in the corner with his 'Kaachan Notes', but they'd discussed long ago that the boy was there for observation only and was not permitted to interrupt unless Hinko addressed him directly.

"Izuku told me something happened," she continued, unbothered by the blonde boy's silence. He would speak to her eventually, he always did. "Was school overwhelming for you? Your mother and I were quite worried about you attending such a prestigious school with so many people and emotions running rampant. No doubt it was a lot for you."

That drew a sneer from the boy and though she couldn't physically see him, she could sense the sharpened teeth being bared in her direction. "It was fucking fine. Lunch was just..." he clicked his tongue, nose scrunching up as it often did when he was struggling with admitting something. He glanced at his friend, as if wanting him to explain instead, and while Izuku was watching them, he made no move to interrupt. She could sense worry coming off of him, knew his face would be scrunched up with the need to speak. "Fuckin' Deku brought home a stray the other day and he ate lunch with us."

Now *that* was interesting. Katsuki had never allowed anyone else into his family dynamic, his friend group. Whatever little followers he had in middle school were strictly that- in middle school. They did not go into his home, they did not meet Inko. To know that Katsuki had even allowed something like that to happen without a fight had Hinko sitting up straight and turning towards Izuku with a questioning glance.

"Ah- he's not a stray," the greenette rushed to clarify, shaking his head. "His name is Todoroki. We met him at the entrance exams and I- well we-" he paused when Katsuki's head turned sharply, "*I* asked if he wanted to come eat dinner with us. Kaachan was fine with it, but when he came to sit with us at lunch he got... umm... well- it wasn't territorial, not like normal at least. It was like- he looked like he smelled something wrong and it confused him. Like he wasn't there,

you know?"

Hinko hummed in interest, turning back to Katsuki with a raised brow. "What is it you smelt?"

But the blonde was already shaking his head, shifting to cross his arms over his chest- a defensive move that he used often when he was uncomfortable with a topic. "It wasn't- it wasn't a smell really. It was like-" he grit his teeth. "There was this weird black stuff around his eye. He's got this scar on his face, it's all fucked up, but there was more to it... like this black smoke that just sat in the air around it." Sharpened nails dug into the sleeves of his hoodie and Hinko made sure to listen carefully, not wanting to miss anything the young boy had to say. No doubt he would refuse to tell her again if she missed something. In the distance she could hear Izuku scribbling in his journal. "If I focused on it enough it was like I could *feel* the memory of the scar. It came in waves, senses sort of I guess." He shrugged. "Like I could hear screaming, I could smell tea, that kind of stuff. But it wasn't... solid. I couldn't focus enough on it to understand what was happening."

It wasn't something Hinko had heard about in Kitsune, or any other Yokai that she knew of. Sure, many demons and spirits were able to see or experience memories, manipulate them or erase them as needed. But kitsune had no such ability, none past manipulating dreams or illusions. And she knew when Mitsuki told her she was pregnant that this child would be something special. She knew he would be different from any other she'd met. Hybrids were not common, in fact, she knew of none that had lived past their first few cycles.

The fact that Katsuki was now old enough to be experiencing these things at all was a miracle.

"Do me a favor, boy," Hinko said casually, drawing his attention to her once more. "I'd like you to take half form- just your ears and tails will do. I am curious about something."

"Hah? What the hell for?"

The older woman *tsk*-ed and snapped her fingers. "Come now, don't argue, just do. Preferably before I wither away and die." Katsuki snorted loudly before she felt a shift in the air, the gentle hum of vibrations and taste of a campfire on her tongue. She focused on the gentle twitching of his ears, the back and forth motion of his tail.

"Izuku darling, tell me how many tails Katsuki has right now."

The green-haired boy jumped slightly at being addressed and stuttered. "H-how many? Um... just the one, Auntie. Like always."

"Hmm..."

"The hell kind of question is that? Am I supposed to have more?"

The words were meant as a joke, but she could hear the underlying question and curiosity in his tone, could feel the way his tail curled around his hip to lay in his lap, the way his body twisted as if he could see a second one sprouting just by sheer will. Perhaps it could, if he wanted it bad enough. She honestly wouldn't put it past the boy, he was determined.

"Poor me a glass of tea, won't you darling," she asked him, waving a hand towards the teapot on the table. Katsuki grumbled, but did as he was told, to which she was grateful. It gave her a moment to gather her thoughts. "There is much you still do not know about your heritage, young Kit, and even more that we don't know simply because of what you are. As I've told you before, Hybrids are practically non-existent, and I've never learnt of one since quirks began appearing. Especially with Kitsune. Not many leave their clans, those who do, don't often survive. Mitsuki was an exception due to her high rank and status. That being said, much of what I teach you is speculation, as we have no definitive way of knowing what you will become."

"Yeah yeah, I'm one of a kind, you've told me all this before," Katsuki growled, fingers tapping anxiously on his own cup of tea. "What does this have to do with fucking IcyHot's black eye and another tail?"

"I'm getting there, do not interrupt me," Hinko scolded, glaring at the boy. And because she might be a little petty, she took a long moment to sip at her tea, releasing a heavy sigh as it settled warm and comforting in her chest. "Now, traditionally, as Kitsune grow older and wiser, they gain more tails. This often comes with big moments in their lives, big changes or revelations. It could take thousands of years for a kitsune to gain another tail, or it could take a couple of months. It's different for each." She shrugged, placing her cup down as she thought back to Mitsuki again. If she recalled, the woman had four tails when they'd first met, and five when she'd left Katsuki. Hinko wondered briefly if that had changed. "Legend has it that once a Kitsune reaches their ninth tail, they have reached enlightenment and

are ready to move on to whatever is next."

"So they die?" Izuku asked quietly.

Hinko hummed and bobbed her head in consideration. "I suppose you could call it that, in human terms yes. It's different for yokai and spirits. Death is not a concept that they experience, but if you'd like to call it that then it is probably easiest. Regardless, Mitsuki and I, Inko as well, were unsure if you would even gain more tails, Katsuki. You are only a hybrid. We don't know if you will live as long as a Kitsune or if you'll have a human lifespan. We don't know if you can gain new tails at all due to that question." She paused, considering the situation before her. "For a long time, I didn't think you would get any more abilities either. Once your quirk came, you stabilized. You had your three abilities and that was it. The fact that this new one has appeared, though out of your control, leads me to think that the possibility of more tails is very likely."

"Do the abilities come with the tails, or the tails with the abilities," he asked, genuinely curious.

"For you? I have no idea. For a pure blooded kitsune yokai, the tails come with wisdom and experience. They don't necessarily mean new abilities, but they can," she said with a shrug.

Katsuki growled again, shoving his tea away from him. "Then what the fuck does it matter if I have more than one? You made it sound like you were excited or something."

"Did I?" Hinko wondered with a blink, a soft laugh escaping her lips as she batted her hand in the air. "My apologies to get your hopes up. You must remember though, little Kit, that to a Kitsune, a tail is an important thing. It's not just another limb, it's a symbol of power. Those with eight or nine are some of the most powerful beings in the world. They are respected, feared, loved. Gaining a new tail isn't like a birthday. It's like a coronation or a birth. It's celebrated and revered. It's a great honor among the kitsune to receive another tail, you should not take it so lightly, especially being what you are. If you could gain another tail at all, it would be incredibly honorable. It may even serve to keep all of you safe if you ever come across another Yokai."

Katsuki frowned, glancing over at her. "How would it keep us safe?"

"A hybrid Kitsune is seen as nothing but a bastard to the clan," she explained, remembering what Mitsuki had told her all those years ago

when she'd first learned she was pregnant. "*If* they live long enough to grow at all, they are mere pests to most yokai. They are weak and lack the power that pure blooded creatures do, and most yokai will treat them the same as they treat humans. A hybrid however that can gain more tails? Who has the honor of doing so?" Hinko smiled softly, steepling her fingers in front of her. "That gives them power. And I don't mean physical power or abilities. That would give you power within your clan. You would have a fighting chance of joining, of taking your rightful place within the spirit world if you so choose. You could fight for that right, prove to them that you're more than just a hybrid bastard."

As expected, the young kit growled, shoving away from the table and onto his feet. "Fuck *the clan,"* he spat, bare feet stomping as much as they could across the bamboo floors as he paced, arms flying around him in anger. "They have never done *shit* for me. They want a fight? They can come get it, I'll kick their asses no matter how many tails I got. I'm not going fucking anywhere."

She didn't bother telling him that it might not be his decision. When Mitsuki had given birth to the boy, she'd feared for his life. She'd been afraid that the clan would find Katsuki and kill him just because of what he was. But seeing him here, now, grown and powerful beyond any hybrid Hinko had ever heard of and barely 15... the old priestess feared more for what might happen *with* Katsuki than *to* him. If the clan found out he was gaining new abilities, if Katsuki was able to gain new tails... who knew what the clan would do.

There were too many possibilities surround this boy, too many unknowns.

"This boy from your school," Hinko said carefully, stopping Katsuki in his tracks mid stride. "I would like to meet him. It would be easiest for me to understand what this new ability of yours is if I can see him face to face."

"You can't see shit, you old hag, you're blind," the blonde growled, dragging his hands through his hair harshly.

She ignored his words, having long ago gotten used to them. "Regardless, I'd like to meet him. Bring him to me next weekend. In the meantime, I suggest you keep him close, little Kit," Hinko said, her voice brokering no arguments. "As you grow in power, you'll grow in presence as well. Other yokai will start noticing you. A singular Kitsune on his own is cheese to a mouse, but a Kitsune with a pack

can be a formittable thing. Make friends, keep them close, choose them wisely. Young Izuku is strong in mind, but you will need those strong in body as well."

The boy didn't hesitate to go on his rant about not needing anyone, but Hinko dutifully ignored it, having heard it all before.

Instead, she was focused now on Izuku. The green-haired boy was flustered, hovering around the blonde in an attempt to calm him, and she knew eventually he would. He had that affect on Katsuki, always managed to temper him, to soothe him. It was an impressive power in it's own, one that the kitsune would no doubt need later on in his journey. Hinko had no doubt that his struggles were only just beginning, and he would need a soft presence on his side if he was going to... survive, she supposed.

She wasn't sure what path he would choose. If he would stay in the human world or choose to discover his clan, to discover Mitsuki and his birthright.

Somehow she thought the decision would not be easy for him.

Chapter End Notes

worldbuilding woooooo

Chapter 5: An Opportunity

Chapter Summary

Izuku and Hatsume get offered a once in a school-time opportunity.

Chapter Notes

IMPORTANT NOTES:
I'm going to say this now before I forget but please keep this in mind! For a while, the story is going to stick to the canon plot (with the training arc and the USJ and Kamino, etc). That being said, obviously things are going to be a little different since Izuku isn't in the hero course. Eventually I'll get to a point where the canon plot just isn't going to fly and I'm going to diverge from it completely into my own thing (Katsuki's kitsune plot), but just be aware that a lot of stuff that's going to start happening will be a mix of canon and new, and then only new. I'll do brief explanations about how canon stuff is still happening, it'll just be to different characters since Izuku won't be important to the One for All story without the quirk. I hope that makes sense. (Also since I'll have canon stuff in here, just beware of spoilers. I'll try to keep away from comic spoilers and just stick to anime stuff for now, but eventually we may get there).
Also just for ease of writing and understanding, the names will kind of go back and forth for characters. I'm not going to be sticking with the traditional way of people always being called by their last names. Please don't @ me for that.

OH ALSO -
Hatsume is a little out of character because she is a LOT and I have a hard time writing her. So like... yeah

See the end of the chapter for more notes

In the end, they weren't able to take Shouto to Auntie Hinko when she asked. With school assignments building up, Kaachan and Shouto starting their physical training, and Endeavor practically sucking up any extra time Shouto had, they simply didn't have time. Though both

boys promised to bring him as soon as they were able- that is to say, as soon as Kaachan admitted what his second quirk was and how it was related to Shouto. Which he had adamantly refused to do thus far.

A month into school and the blonde still refused to sit directly next to the boy unless he was on his opposite side, not closest to the scar.

Izuku understood. He tried to take that spot instead when he could, to help his best friend out and make him comfortable. And yes, while he thought Kaachan should just get over it and *tell* Shouto since they'd all become friends now, he also understood why he didn't.

He also understood why the rest of Kaachan's friends- who Izuku decided to call the Squad as a joke and it just kind of stuck- also didn't know anything about Kaachan even *having* a second quirk. Shouto never mentioned it and Kaachan didn't use it, so they were just... blissfully unaware.

Izuku didn't know the Squad very well. He tried to have lunch with them when he could and had briefly met them each, but with everyone's schedules piling up and Izuku's desperate need to stay busy, he found himself mostly working on support projects, holing himself up in the labs until he was dragged out by tooth and nail.

Midoriya Izuku may not have a quirk, or be a half-breed yokai, or be incredibly strong and agile like Kaachan, but no one could ever say that he wasn't smart. It had taken him a long time, and a *lot* of prodding from his best friend, to realize that he could use his smarts and skills to his advantage. Because Kaachan was right, being able to analyze and strategize and support is just as important as the actual rescuing and fighting.

It was solidified in his mind when school started and he found himself in the support classes, absolutely *thriving*.

He was ahead in nearly all of his courses by at least two weeks, more in some of them. Any extra time he had after or before school, (sometimes during lunch or during classes he was already ahead in) he spent in the analysis room or the building lab with Mr. Maijima (AKA Powerloader) and his new friend Hatsume.

Hatsume was… a lot. He couldn't deny it, but she was also a genius and they worked incredibly well together. Izuku found they made a great team, with his analysis skills and her mechanical skills. (Though Powerloader might use the word *chaotic* instead of great.) Still, Hatsume was the perfect wall to bounce his ideas off of, to babble and

babble about heroes and quirks and possible support items or strategies to use depending on abilities. In return, Izuku was the perfect person for her to spit item ideas at, for her to ask if something might or might not work depending on quirk usage and side effects.

When the support students were given permission to assist on creating the hero student's costumes and support items, Izuku jumped at the chance in enlisting Hatsume's help. He'd been working on ideas for Kaachan's hero costume for a decade, and he was damned if he was going to let anyone else work on it. Hatsume of course had her own student to work with – Iida Tenya, the boy with engines in his legs – but they partnered up regardless, assisting each other in ways only the two of them could.

That being said, it was a bit upsetting when he had to stop in the final touches of Kaachan's new gauntlets to be called to the principal's office, Hatsume right by his side.

"I'm just saying, *you're* the one who blew up the lab this week," Hatsume said with a smirk.

"Nitroglycerin is *extremely* sensitive to heat! You knew that," Izuku argued, throwing his hands up in the air as they drew up to the door of Nezu's office. "You were the one who decided to start using the welding equipment on Iida's engine supports! We agreed you'd find something different to work on when I'm working with the nitro! So *technically*, you blew up the lab."

The pink haired girl cackled beside him, tossing an arm over his shoulder and pointing at him. "But *you* were the one handling explosive chemicals, so the blame goes to you, my friend."

Izuku sighed, dropping his head back so it leaned on her arm. "We are so in trouble. We were already on thin ice after you caught the second lab on fire last week. We're only *a month* into school and we're already going to get expelled."

"You will be if you don't get inside," a tired sounding voice said from behind them.

Izuku screeched, arms pinwheeling as he turned. Hatsume jumped at the sound, but otherwise just grinned at the new person standing behind them. Or not… new really, just- well… it was-

"Eraserhead," Izuku breathed, blinking up at the undercover hero and clutching at Hatsume's glove. "Holy crap, Hatsu, pinch me. Pinch me,"

he ordered, hissing as her fingers pinched against his skin. “Holy shi- ahh- I mean! Mr. Eraserhead sir- you- wow. It’s an honor!”

The man in front of them sighed, fingers reaching up to pinch the bridge of his nose. He looked exhausted already and it was barely a few hours into the school day. Izuku couldn’t help but wonder if his own students (Kaachan and Shouto’s class) were the reason for his tired mood, or if it was just the man’s general disposition. He vaguely remembered the Kitsune telling him the teacher slept through most of the classes that didn’t require his immediate attention.

“Get. Inside. Please.” Eraserhead grumbled, pushing both students towards the door, though not unkindly. “And don’t call me that. It’s Mr. Aizawa when we’re at school.”

Principal Nezu was waiting for them when they entered, sat primly at his desk with a pot of tea in front of him and a couple of mugs already ready and steaming. He smiled brightly at them and gestured towards the two chairs on the other side of the desk.

“Hello! Young Midoriya and Hatsume, I’m so glad you could join me on such short notice,” the rodent man said, waiting patiently as they each took a seat. He didn’t seem to mind the fact that both Izuku and Hatsume were covered in grime and oil and scorch marks. No doubt the teachers were used to most of the support students looking like this.

Before Nezu could continue however, Izuku shot back to his feet, his heart pounding and nerves electric under his skin. He dipped into a deep bow, arms straight at his sides as he rushed to speak. “Principal Nezu, sir! I want to apologize on behalf of both of us for any trouble we’ve caused you. Had I not been so careless and been more aware of the actions of those around me, then it would not have happened. I put others in danger due to my recklessness. Please accept my apologies and my assurance that nothing like this will ever happen again.”

It was a lie, for the most part. Izuku knew Hatsume well enough to know that they’d probably blow the lab up again within the next week, but he could at least promise to *try* not to let it happen.

There was a brief silence in the room, broken only by the sound of the creature before them setting his teacup down on its plate.

“That is very admirable, Midoriya,” Nezu smiled. “But I cannot accept your apology since I have no idea what you’re talking about!”

His voice lilted suspiciously, but Izuku straightened up and frowned, sharing a confused look with Hatsume. When she only shrugged, he glanced back at their principal and slowly lowered himself into his seat. “Um… is this not about the lab explosion yesterday?”

“Lab explosion?” The hybrid laughed, the sound grating and a bit unnerving to Izuku’s ears, but the principal waved their worries away with a paw and shook his head. “Oh dear, no. I know nothing about it! As long as no one was hurt, then all is well. Don’t fret about some little explosions. Honestly, I’d be a bit surprised if the lab *didn’t* explode a couple times a month.”

Both students let out a sigh, shoulders slumping slightly before Hatsume leaned forward. “Then why are we here, sir?”

“Oh! Yes!” Nezu pushed his tea aside and folded his palms on the desk in front of him, staring the two of them down with a glint in his beady little eyes. “You may know this already, young Midoriya, but at the end of this week Hero Class 1-A will be taking a trip to an off campus facility called the USJ-“

“The Unforseen Simulation Joint!”Izuku interrupted excitedly. He’d heard of it before of course, it wasn’t necessarily a secret- though it’s location moved around each year for safety reasons- but the moment Kaachan had come home saying they’d be going to it, he had dove head first into research. (A part of him was a little jealous that the blonde got to go and he didn’t, but he decided to live vicariously through Kaachan’s hero escapades.) “They have different situations set up for the hero students to navigate on their own with teacher supervision!” He explained, turning to Hatsume with a smile so big it made his cheeks hurt. “It’s designed as a disaster rescue course, the whole building split between different kinds of disasters. They change each year, but it’s usually the basics: fires, storms, earthquakes, collapsed buildings. That kind of thing. It’s supposed to be massive! Rumor has it there’s even whole city blocks inside!” Nezu laughed at his enthusiasm and Izuku blushed, sinking into himself a bit with a shy smile, rubbing the back of his neck. “Ah- sorry sir. I didn’t mean to interrupt.”

But the other just waved his paw again and shared a strange look with Mr. Aizawa. “No, my boy! Your enthusiasm is a refreshment! I love to see students eager about hero work and learning!” Nezu paused to dig into a drawer beside him before pulling out two papers and placing them on the desk before him. Permission slips, Izuku recognized. “This is why we’ve brought you here! Your instructors have been quite

impressed with both of you in the past month, especially considering the fact that you are maintaining your grades, putting in an impressive amount of hours into the labs, and managing to stay a couple weeks ahead in your assignments." Hatsume preened beside Izuku, who blushed again, but the principal continued. "Now, I've spoken with your instructors, as well as Mr. Aizawa, and we have a… unique opportunity to offer the both of you, but only if you believe you will have the time to participate. I do not wish for it to get in the way of your general studies."

Izuku and Hatsume shared a look. Neither one of them was necessarily struggling in any of their classes, and both were workaholics who didn't know the meaning of downtime. Extra work wasn't really that big of a deal to either of them really. So they both shrugged, turning back to the rodent teacher with curious looks.

"Excellent! Now, we thought it would be a great opportunity for the both of you to attend the USJ with Class 1-A to observe and provide feedback based on your conclusions. This will not only serve your analysis skills, Midoriya, but also your observational and support skills, Hatsume. Now, as you both know already, support students often assist the hero students in their costume and item design. Every few years however, we get students advanced enough to offer them a bit… higher of a position," he said cryptically, his grin a bit curious and dangerous. "We'd like to pair you up with Class 1-A specifically. This would mean that the two of you, and no other support class students, would be working directly with Mr. Aizawa's students. No other class will be allowed to use you unless they've gotten permission. You will work only on Class 1-A's items and costumes, using your skills to help them be better heroes. Though we will still outsource the making of the clothing as needed, I want you to focus on the quirk specific items they will need throughout learning and training." He paused, steepling his fingers before him and staring at them in consideration. "The both of you are at the top of your class and class representatives. I think it would benefit you greatly to see the gear you've made in action, as well as the students, in order to adjust and learn alongside them. So, what do you guys think?"

It honestly wasn't even a question. Not one that needed debate or thinking. Neither of them even hesitated before agreeing to Nezu's offer.

And it wasn't even because of Shouto and Kaachan that Izuku agreed. Sure, he was excited to work with his two best friends, but it was the *opportunity* that was clawing it's way through Izuku's bones. The

opportunity to see the quirks up close, to work directly with heroes-in-training, analyzing their quirks and skills, and then utilizing that information to make them even better. It's what Izuku wanted more than anything.

When he was younger, before they graduated middle school, before the 'All Might Situation', before the sludge villain, all Izuku wanted was to be a hero. At the time he didn't care what kind of hero, he just wanted to be one. He wanted to help people, save people, just like his idol did. It was Kaachan who taught him that he could be a hero without a quirk. It was Kaachan who reminded him that heroes just pander to what they have, and what Izuku has is a mind for analysis and observation, for strategizing and designing. The second he was allowed in the labs on campus, he found a new love in the mechanical side of hero work. There wasn't a day that went by where he didn't have grease staining the creases in his fingers, where he didn't have bumps and bruises from whatever disaster they'd managed to fuck up in class, where he wasn't grinning or laughing at whatever ridiculous thing Hatsume had decided to try (and fail) to make.

This was who he was. *This* was where he thrived.

A hero who made other heroes better. A hero who *helped* other heroes.

And he loved it.

"Today we're officially beginning our practical training," Mr. Aizawa said, voice dull and tired, as he led the two support students down a long hall towards Class 1-A's classroom. They'd left Nezu's office and immediately turned in that direction, no time for either student to change back into their uniforms or clean off the grime and dust that had gathered in their hair and skin. Izuku didn't mind, but he'd wished he had time to stop by the labs to grab his things at the very least. He was supposed to have finished Kaachan's gauntlets already and the meeting had really gotten in the way of that. "I've gotten permission from your teachers to allow you time with my class for the rest of the day today, as well as time at the USJ on Friday. Make sure you've gotten your assignments in order for those days because you will not be exempt from work just because you've been given this opportunity."

Lucky for us, we're ahead, he thought with a grin.

"I want you to watch where they are now so you have a comparison for their actions at the USJ. Since it's their first day of practical joint training, I also want you to make observations on what they do during the events, such as their teamwork, their quirk usage, their strategy. I'll expect you to tell them how they did in the end and explain your findings. They are here to learn just like you, an extra set of eyes will always help them in these situations. Show them where they could have been better." Pale eyes trailed behind him to stare down Hatsume. "I do not want you to change their current costume designs based on what you see however, not yet. I want them to get through USJ before you make any major changes. Do not make suggestions to their costumes either. Today will be their practical training for offense and defense, and Friday will be their practical training in search and rescue. You will observe both events and make changes based on what you see in *both*."

Izuku hummed, nodding along with the teacher as he thought about the coming week. "Would it be possible to get together with the whole class after USJ? Maybe on the bus or when we get back to campus, to discuss what *they* think?"

Aizawa paused in front of a large red door and turned to face them, raising a single eyebrow towards Izuku. "Explain."

The greenette was under the impression that Aizawa knew exactly what he was thinking, but he did as he was told anyway. "Well sir, even with help from support students, and professionals later on, heroes always need to be aware of what they look like, what items they need or do not need, and how they can or cannot be utilized. They may think it works great for offence and defense today, but get to search and rescue and find something is just in the way. While it's great for us as support to be able to help them and educate them on what *we* think would be best, they need to be able to see what is wrong as well. Not only that, it also gives us the opportunity to view something from the heroes point of view," Izuku explained, hands waving a bit as he spoke. "We might not see anything wrong with a particular item, but the hero might. Being able to make observations from both sides will help not only the hero, but also us."

"Izu you're so smaaart," Hatsume cooed beside him, grabbing onto his arm and grinning. "It's so hot when you do that."

Aizawa ignored the pink-haired girl, eyes instead trained on Izuku for

much longer than he was necessarily comfortable with. After a long silence filled with nothing but Hatsume's cooing, the corner of the hero's mouth twitched and he nodded. "I think Nezu was right about you. You'll be good for my students. And you're right on all accounts. We should have time after the ride back to briefly discuss things. If not, I will assign it as homework over the weekend and you two can come back here on Monday to compare notes. Now," he waved back to the door behind him, closing his eyes in exhaustion as they heard loud chatter and yelling coming from the other side. (Izuku was sure that was Kaachan yelling at some point, but he couldn't tell what it was about.) "I'll introduce you both to the class and explain what to expect. I'll then give you half an hour to get acquainted with who they are and what their quirks are before we move to Grounds B for our Battle Trial training." Those cloudy eyes blinked open once more before settling on Izuku. "You may already know some of them and their abilities, Midoriya, but I want you to pretend you don't. Let them explain them to you so you know where they think they stand. Got it?"

Izuku nodded and they both followed the man into the rowdy classroom. He recognized most of the students from the entrance exams, though a few he didn't know much, if anything, about. Kaachan and Shouto were in the back corner, all but surrounded by the only people in the room that Izuku *did* know, that being the Bakusquad, and the gravity girl was sat primly at the front. Other than those, he only knew of a few others.

The room fell silent upon their entrance, each student quickly finding their way to their seats, though all shooting Izuku and Hatsume curious looks. He found Kaachan's confused expression immediately, Shouto in front of him with an equally curious gaze, one eyebrow raised and head tilted slightly in that adorable way he did when he was trying to determine something without being told what it was.

Unfortunately all Izuku could do was give a shy wave and wait beside the teacher.

"This is Midoriya Izuku and Hatsume Mei, they are support students who will be joining us for today's class, as well as our USJ trip," Aizawa began in a deadpan way that made Izuku wonder how anyone didn't fall asleep during his lectures. "As pro heroes you will often work with specific support heroes and companies, so this will be good practice for you. Midoriya and Hatsume will be your go to support and will be working directly with our class for the next three years. I expect you to listen and utilize them, but remember they have their own classes and studies as well and they are not your slaves." Pulling

a yellow sleeping bag out of seemingly nowhere, the pro hero slipped into it and curled up under the podium like a caterpillar, eyes already drifting closed. "You have thirty minutes for questions and for you to introduce yourselves and your quirks. Then we'll go to Grounds B for training. Don't wake me up."

The room exploded immediately, questions being shouted and echoing off the walls. Izuku was afraid it would have annoyed the teacher hidden in the podium, but he didn't even seem to notice.

"Are you Midoriya's brother?"

"Why are you covered in dirt?"

"Are you making our costumes?"

"What's your quirks?"

"Are all of the classes getting personal support students?"

Now, Izuku knew that Kaachan's class was a lot to handle. He'd met his squad before and they were... a lot. But he prided himself in being able to handle people like that- what with Kaachan and Hatsume both. Still, being bombarded with so many questions had him taking a stumbling step back and raising his hands to awkwardly placate them. "Um- why don't we just start with introductions and we can do questions at the end, okay?"

It calmed the students enough for him to breathe and he spared his partner a glance, silently begging for her to start.

Hatsume didn't disappoint, jabbing a gloved thumb into her chest as she stepped forward. "The name's Hatsume Mei and my quirk is Zoom! My eyes are crazy good and I can see things from the itty bitty dirt specs on the ground, all the way to five kilometers! Even more if I have my goggles on," she said, tapping a finger to the set of goggles sitting on her dreads. "A super useful quirk for building and observing, not so much for killing robots in entrance exams," she laughed.

That was something Izuku loved about Hatsume. She was a breath of fresh air, someone he could relate to, and always great for bringing up the mood. Even though she wasn't quirkless, she still wasn't traditionally suited for general hero work. Yet it didn't bother her. Hatsume's love fell between gears and screws, her passion in creating and destroying, trying and failing and trying again. She didn't give up and she didn't let anything get her down. If something didn't work,

she figured out a different way to do it. Again and again and again. Even Kaachan liked her, though he was reluctant to admit it.

"Yeah, she's alright I guess."

"You guess?"

"She's fucking crazy as a bag of bolts, but she's determined ain't she? Fuckin' girl never lets anything stop her. I can get with that."

"And I'm Midoriya Izuku. Yes, Kaachan- ah- *Katsuki* is my adopted brother but-"

The blonde in the back gagged, rolling his eyes as the attention in the room drew to him. "Gross, don't call me your brother, nerd."

Izuku pouted, sticking his tongue out at the blonde. "Don't be rude, Kaachan! Technically by law he's my brother, but he's always just been my best friend. Please call me Izuku, it might make it easier and less confusing. Um, as for me- I work a lot with the support items like Hatsu does," he said, gesturing to the girl beside him, "but I'm a lot more on the analytical side of things. I do quirk studies and strategic building and things like that. Now, why don't we go around and you can all introduce yourselves and tell us a bit about your quirks, even if you already know us. That way- oh, um, yes?"

Mina, a pink skinned girl that Izuku knew hung out with Kaachan, raised her hand quickly, black eyes wide and a grin splitting her face. "Wait! You didn't tell us your quirk!"

That was on purpose, Izuku thought, barely holding back a wince. Being in support, quirks weren't as important as intelligence and brains, so Izuku had gotten used to the fact that no one cared about his quirk. He'd managed to make it an entire month without anyone finding out he was quirkless. Well- sort of. Two weeks into school he'd finally managed to confess it to Shouto after much prodding from Kaachan, but the dual haired student had taken it in stride, looking almost confused as to why Izuku seemed so stressed about it. A few days later, he'd told Hatsume after they were both laying on the ground in the lab with concussions from the explosion only seconds before. She'd only laughed at him for being dumb enough to cross the wires and blow them up. Regardless, telling an entire class of hero students wasn't as easy as telling one son of a pro hero and a half sane mad scientist. (Which had been *difficult*, okay?)

But Kaachan had been pushing him to embrace it, especially with how

well he'd been doing in school now. And hadn't getting this opportunity from Nezu in the first place just guaranteed that he didn't *need* a quirk to advance or get into UA? Didn't it prove that he was just as good as those sitting here?"

"Well," he started a bit awkwardly, rubbing the back of his neck as he debated with himself. Green eyes caught red ones and he swallowed, knowing Kaachan wouldn't hold it against him for lying, but also knowing he'd be disappointed. "That's because I don't have one."

He waited for the backlash or the jeers, waited for the questions and the bullying. Instead, he got a silent class, all staring at him as if expecting him to say more. When he didn't, Mina leaned back in her chair and shrugged. "Oh, well that's fine then. Can we start in the back? I'll go first! My name is Ashido Mina but you can call me Mina-"

And it continued on like that, each student jumping in to introduce themselves, seemingly in no order (much to Iida's upset), until Izuku's head was reeling with new information. He was still a little shell shocked at the blatant disregard for his quirkless status, but the smirk on Kaachan's lips told him he probably shouldn't have worried in the first place. Of course these students were great. Of course they'd be accepting. They were training to be heroes and heroes supported each other, supported others, and didn't tear them down because of something they couldn't control. Heroes didn't bully or rip apart dreams. They built you up and cheered you on.

Or at least... they were supposed to.

Chapter End Notes

> Hope everyone enjoyed! Also I didn't mention it here, but I will in the next chapter. Shinsou is in Class 1-A. He replaced Mineta, I just haven't gotten to describing him yet. Woops. We're about to kick off into the Battle Trial, which again will be different from canon since Izuku won't be in it. So keep that in mind.
> Again, thank you everyone for your amazing comments! I love you all!

Chapter 6: Battle Trial

Chapter Summary

The boys go to battle. Theoretically.

Chapter Notes

TRIGGER WARNING:
Izu has a small panic attack at the beginning of this chapter, but it's over pretty quickly. Just be aware and be safe my lovelies! Also maybe warning for the near future on Shinsou. I don't outright say anything in this chapter about him, but be aware he'll have some abuse warnings on him later on. (I can't just let my babies be happy apparently.)

In other news, I kind of low key hate this chapter, but I couldn't get it to go the way I wanted, so I'm settling with it. Hope you guys like it anyway! The USJ is coming soon so like, yay?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku had not been expecting All Might to be there when they'd gotten to the grounds. Apparently, as Aizawa would explain to them, this was their first Foundational Hero Studies Class, their instructor being All Might.

It was the first time the greenette had seen the hero since *that* day. He could still feel the sludge in his throat, under his nails. He could still hear Kaachan's screaming every time he closed his eyes. He could still feel the heartbreak in his chest when the symbol of peace had looked straight at him and told him "I'm sorry kid, but I don't think you can be a hero without a quirk", crushing every dream Izuku had built for himself.

Seeing the man again after that day was… devastating.

Distantly, he knew he was panicking, letting the anxiety build up in his chest, because Kaachan was at his side in an instant, fingers grabbing his chin and turning him. Green eyes met red and the blonde frowned, eyes narrowing. (Later, the shorter boy would be grateful that they were still trailing behind the rest of the class, that no one had seen them pause or seen Kaachan shift in front of Izuku, blocking him from view with his larger body.)

“Breathe, Izu,” he said, voice low enough that the others couldn’t hear him. “Deep breaths. In and out. I’m here, yeah? I’m here. I’m okay,” because it wasn’t just All Might that he was reminded of, it was the sludge. It was the all-consuming fear at seeing Katsuki suffocating and *dying* in front of him when all he could do was claw and claw and claw at blackened ink. He’d woken from plenty of nightmares the past couple of months about that day, about the knowledge that it would have been his fault. *His*. Because he had distracted All Might.

“I’m okay,” Izuku breathed finally, shaking his head at the disbelieving look the blonde gave him. “I’m okay, it was just- I haven’t seen him since. I didn’t know- I didn’t know he was teaching your class.”

Katsuki nodded, not releasing Izuku’s chin until he saw the panic clearing from the boy’s eyes. “I didn’t tell you,” he said with a shrug as he took a step away, though Izuku could see the anger in his eyes, probably blaming himself for the panic attack. “You never told me what happened, but I knew it was something bad. Figured you wouldn’t want to know.”

“I knew he was teaching here,” Izuku whispered, releasing a shaky breath. “I just didn’t think-“

“Izuku, are you alright?”

The green-haired boy jumped slightly and turned, big eyes landing on Shouto as the other boy stepped up towards them, his furrowed brow the only sign of emotion on his otherwise expressionless face.

The youngest of the three laughed awkwardly and waved his hands around, desperately trying to erase the unease in his stomach. “Oh I’m fine! I promise! Sorry- it’s just- bad memories. Um… anyway, moving on- you guys should be getting ready, shouldn’t you?” He rushed to change the subject, waving towards the briefcases in both boy’s hands. “Don’t want to keep the number one hero waiting! Oh! And Kaachan, come find me when you’re done changing. I have one extra thing for your costume, they just wouldn’t fit in your briefcase, so I have them here,” he said, gesturing to two larger containers behind him.

Shouto had nodded, but Kaachan paused, glancing back at the boy with a twisted worry on his face.

Determined not to make it a big deal however, Izuku smiled at him, a genuine smile, and nodded. “I’m okay, Kaachan. I promise.”

And that, he supposed, was that. Topic avoided, panic subsided. (He stubbornly ignored the worried looks they both gave him as he ushered them off.)

By the time Kaachan and Shouto were back, Izuku was fiddling with the handle of one of the cases beside him, face scrunched up in a heated argument with Hatsume beside him.

“I just don’t think it’s that big of a deal, *Izuku*! If you add some supports on the inside-“

“The supports will get in the way of the closing mechanisms, *Hatsu*,” Izuku argued back, tossing his hands up in the air. “The whole point is smaller containment without compromising the internal storage compartments. More supports will take room away from the storage, and I’d have to figure out how to break those down too!”

The other inventor groaned and shook her head. “But without the extra supports then the entire structure will be weakened from the break down points you’re trying to put in! They’d crack under any pressure.”

“What the fuck are you talking about, you nerds?”

Izuku perked up at the sound of Katsuki’s voice, turning sharply to grin at the two of them and trying dutifully to ignore the thumping in his chest at the sight of them in their hero costumes.

Katsuki’s of course was all blacks and oranges, with little spots of green here and there. The lack of sleeves put his impressive muscles on display and the headpiece curled around the shell of his ears before connecting to his ear plugs. (Eventually, the ear plugs would be switched out for hearing aids, Izuku knew, but hopefully they’d serve well enough to protect his ears a little longer than if he wasn’t wearing them.)

Shouto’s costume was a little plain, just a white jumpsuit with golden shoulder supports, but he still looked good. His entire left side however was covered in a thick layer of ice that did not look comfortable at all. Izuku just barely managed not to ask about it, remembering Aizawa’s warning from earlier. He’d have to wait until after the trials to ask.

“You guys look great!” Hatsume chimed in from beside him, elbowing the boy to break him out of his stunned stupor.

“O-oh! Yeah- yeah you guys look awesome! Sorry Shouto, but you weren’t my assigned student when we were making costumes so I don’t have anything for you, but-“ he turned around, lifting one of the large containers onto a bench and grinning at Kaachan. “I do have one last touch for you, Kaachan!”

A manic sort of grin spread across the blonde’s face and he rubbed his hands together. “Fuck yeah, tell me it’s my gauntlets.”

Izuku blinked, face falling instantly and lips pulling up into a pout. “Gauntlets? You didn’t say you wanted gauntlets…” But, as Kaachan had always told him, Izuku was a shit liar. He couldn’t stop the corners of his lips from twitching when the blonde sputtered angrily at him, not knowing how to respond.

“Oh you little shit- you’re fuckin’ messing with me!” Kaachan growled, the sound coming from low in the back of his throat.

Izuku covered the rapid beating of his heart with a cackle and popped the case open. “Of course I’m messing with you. We’ve been designing your costume for years, Kaachan. Now, put these on-“ he ordered, tossing a pair of compression gloves at the blonde who quickly did as he was told. Izuku, meanwhile, tugged the first gauntlet out of its protective casing and turned to hold it out.

Honestly, he could easily admit that he’d outdone himself with these new little toys. Or big toys rather. Hatsume had been helpful with spitballing ideas, but Izuku had built them all himself, had spent hours and hours bent over a desk with a paintbrush or a screwdriver, face hidden behind a welding helmet as sparks flew around him. And they were perfect. Or as perfect as he could get them in only a month’s time.

The gauntlets were large and a bit oblong, shaped like grenades to match Kaachan’s aesthetic, and painted a deep green that settled well with his orange and black colour scheme. They were a bit larger than what Izuku had imagined, but judging by the look on Kaachan’s face, he wasn’t bothered at all.

“Okay, so just slide your arm in here,” he instructed, holding the first gauntlet up as the blonde slid his arm in. “There’s a button here to press, that will activate your internal supports,” he said, tilting Kaachan’s arm so he could see the way the metal supports attached to the metal plating on his sleeves. “That way they don’t fall off and they stay in place while you’re fighting. This down here is your main

storage. The entire gauntlet is set up to absorb excess nitroglycerin that you sweat out, and it all congeals and is stored at the base here." Izuku glanced up to make sure his friend was following along, smiling at the serious expression of concentration the blonde had etched into his face. He pointed at the large silver trigger hanging off the edge. "You pull this and it expels all of the storage container in one large blast. You'll have down time though between blasts until it builds back up, so don't rely too heavily on it."

"Got it- Holy shit Izu," the boy mumbled, twisting his arm back and forth in awe, "These are fucking incredible. You really are-"

"Izu~" Hatsume interrupted from his side, grabbing the short boy's shoulders and shaking him slightly. "Show him what I maaaade! Please! Show him, show him!"

Kaachan raised an eyebrow at the girl, watching as Izuku rolled his eyes and popped open another case. "Here's your second gauntlet, goes on the same way as the first, works the same way too. *However*, Hatsume made you some presents as well because we had extra nitro left over and she got a little bored-"

"Look at these *babies*," Hatsume squealed, shoving herself into Kaachan's space without warning and holding up her own silver case full of hand sized grenades. "They work just like your gauntlets, but smaller. They're fillable, so we already put your extra nitro in them, and all you have to do is press this little button here," she said, picking one up and showing him the bottom of the grenade, "and you have five seconds to throw and duck!"

"*Exactly* five seconds, Kaachan," Izuku warned him, wincing at the memory of finding that detail out.

"But~" Hatsume continued, as if he'd never interrupted. "Watch this- this is the best part!" Without warning, the girl pressed the button on the one in her hand.

Kaachan reeled back, arm already reaching out to shove Shouto behind him. But Hatsu just grinned and tossed the thing into the air at the last second, watching with manic glee as the grenade exploded above them, drawing all eyes in their direction. The explosion itself wasn't a huge one, but it was big enough to hurt if it was aimed at a person. The impressive part however, was when the remnants of the casing fell right back into Hatsume's hands.

The grenade itself looked cracked open like an ornate egg, the inside

empty and charred a bit, but the outside perfectly intact. “See? They’re refillable! If you can retrieve them, you can just add a little sweat and bam!” She yelled, making the blonde jump and sneer at her, “Infinite grenades!”

“Miss Hatsume,” All Might called from the other side of the room. “Please refrain from demonstrations without fair warning!”

“This is the best fucking day of my life,” Kaachan breathed.

There was something about Shinsou Hitoshi that set Katsuki on edge, and it wasn’t his quirk, or the weird black smoke that settled unnervingly around his jaw and mouth, like some sort of mask that only he could see. It was the fact that the purple haired bastard had somehow wheedled his way into Katsuki’s group of friends without even doing anything. He just sort of showed up one day and was *there*, like he’d been there the whole time and Katsuki just hadn’t noticed. Not that it bothered him *that* much. The kid was quiet, didn’t talk much and wasn’t as annoying as the others. He was kind of like Shouto in that way.

Still, he was weird. He sat too close to Katsuki sometimes, or stared at him with narrowed eyes for far longer than the blonde was comfortable with. Like he was trying to pick the blonde apart by the seams and figure out what made him tic. If he hadn’t promised Izuku he’d play nice, then Katsuki probably would have blasted the kid’s face off by now.

When they got partnered up for the battle trial against gravity girl and engine legs, Katsuki took the opportunity to finally address what had been pissing him off for weeks now.

“Listen, if you’ve got a problem with me then just say it, stop being a coward,” he growled after pulling the bastard to the side of the room where no one would hear them.

Shinsou frowned, raising a single eyebrow in genuine confusion. “I don’t have a problem with you.”

“Then what’s with the weird shit you do,” Katsuki argued, poking a hard finger into the boy’s shoulder. When the other boy didn’t respond, he let out a warning growl. “The staring and the hovering. What you got a crush or something? Is that it?”

Honestly he hoped not. Katsuki would never admit it, but Shinsou

wasn't exactly his type. Namely, he didn't have green hair or heterochromic eyes. (You know, hypothetically, if he had a type that is…) It was that question however that finally broke the emotionless expression on Shinsou's face, indifference switching quickly to confusion and then disgust. He took a shaky step back from the Kitsune and shook his head.

"What? No! No offense, but you're the wrong blonde for me," he said quickly, waving his hands in front of himself. Purple eyes settled on red and the boy sighed, running a hand over his hair. "Look, I don't know what it is, okay? I get these… feelings sometimes. Not *those* kinds of feelings. My gran used to say I could sense the spirit world, that I had some weird connection to it or whatever. She was into all that spiritual mumbo jumbo. I figure it's just some weird side effect of my quirk though. You just feel-" he shrugged, gesturing towards Katsuki's entire being. "Different, I guess. It's hard to explain. I'm still trying to figure out what it is."

Panic settled in the back of Katsuki's throat and he had to clench his fists to hide the claws that threatened to come out. There was no way Shinsou knew what he was, no way he could have just *guessed*. He'd have said something if he did. Right? Auntie Hinko had warned him that others would begin to sense him if he wasn't careful. Is that what this was? Was he getting strong enough to sense already? Was there a way to hide that? To stop it? Did he want to? And why Shinsou of all people?

He didn't have time to dwell on the answers before they were called for their turn. It was the first time Katsuki got the chance to see Shinsou's quirk in action, the first time any of them got to actually. They knew how it worked by technicality, but seeing it was a different matter entirely.

The way gravity girl's eyes went dead instantly after responding made a shiver run up his spine.

With her out of the way however, finishing the task and finding the bomb was almost laughably easy. The engine kid was good, fast enough to keep up with Katsuki, but his stamina was nothing compared to the blonde's and he ran himself out before time was up, making it just a matter of seconds before Katsuki had him tied up and dangling from a window.

They'd won. So why did Katsuki feel like there was still something unsettled in his stomach?

The battle trial continued to the next group, and Katsuki found he didn't want to follow up with Shinsou just yet. He needed to speak with Izuku about everything, about the weird fog around two of their classmates faces, about the 'feelings' the purple bastard got around him… It made him uneasy, the fact that there were things he didn't know.

Because he didn't like not knowing things. Not understanding things.

"We need to take them to Auntie Hinko," Izuku mumbled from beside him, his voice low and face twisted in consideration. They didn't have long to talk between rounds, and Shouto was up next so they'd have to watch for sure, but Katsuki *had* to tell him or he felt like his chest was going to burst with anxiety. "She wanted to meet Shouto anyway, and if you're seeing the same thing around Shinsou's face, then we should probably figure out what it is. Did you see anything when you looked at it?"

"I've been seeing it for weeks," Katsuki grumbled, shaking his head. "Didn't notice it until after I saw Half-and-Half's and it's been there ever since. Haven't tried looking into it though, not after last time."

He could still hear the distant screams in the back of his mind when he thought about the scar on Shouto's face. He tried not to.

Izuku hummed and bobbed his head, viridian eyes glancing over at Shinsou across the room. "I still think we should tell her, bring them to see her. I know you don't want people knowing about what you are, but we can play it off as a secondary quirk like usual. I'm just worried," he mumbled softly, big eyes turning to stare up at the blonde. "I'm worried it's something bad, something dangerous. Like they're in trouble or something but you're the only one who can see it."

And Katsuki hadn't said it, but he'd worried the same thing. The energy around the two was not… good. He knew that much. It was like panic and fear and anxiety laced together in a series of images he didn't want to focus on. He'd very carefully avoided even *looking* at Shouto's scar at this point, but Shinsou's fog covered half his face. It was hard to avoid. It made it hard to breathe sometimes if Katsuki looked at him too long, no matter how much he tried to ignore the fog itself and no matter how much he avoided staring directly at it.

"It's not just that," he grumbled, looking away from the subject of conversation and back to his best friend. "The bastard said he could…

I don't know… *feel* the spirit world or some fucking thing. He said I felt weird. What the hell does that even mean?"

Izuku's face screwed up at that and he nodded. Katsuki had no doubt he'd been thinking the same thing. "I have no idea, but it's even more reason we should tell Auntie. She did say you should have people on your side, in your corner. Maybe this can be the start of it. Tell them the truth, or at least Shouto. I think he deserves to know."

Katsuki snorted, rolling his eyes and slumping back into the couch cushions with a pout. "You only think that because you like him."

"I-I- you like him too!" Izuku stuttered, his face bright red and fingers clutching at his sleeves.

And the Kitsune couldn't deny it. Katsuki was stubborn, not blind. He knew the guy was hot, and his calm almost awkward demeanor was kind of adorable. So different from Izuku's excitable and energetic self. Katsuki didn't like him at first, or at least… he didn't want to like him. Shouto had been inserted into the middle of a duo that only ever knew each other. Katsuki and Izuku were inseparable. They knew each other better than anyone else, they balanced each other out, pandered to each other's weaknesses and strengths. The moon's pull to the ocean's tides. Working in perfect tandem with each other to create synchronicity. Shouto had been… unexpected to say the least.

Katsuki didn't want anyone getting between him and Izuku. He didn't want the ebb and flow to be disrupted. He didn't want it to *change*. But the thing was… it didn't.

Shouto slid into their dynamic like he was always meant to be there. It was still new, still a little awkward sometimes… but it wasn't bad. Nothing really changed besides the fact that Shouto was there now. The shoreline to Katsuki's ocean, sand glittering in Izuku's moonlight. Never disrupting the flow. Just a stable ground beside them.

Okay so yeah, maybe Katsuki *did* like him. But he wasn't even sure how that *worked*, especially since Izuku liked him too. And he definitely did not have time for anything weird like that right now.

Maybe later, when they'd all settled into school and schedules and emotions. Maybe when they could sit down properly discuss what the hell any of them were feeling. (And in Shouto's case, if he even *was* feeling.)

Katsuki snorted to himself, rolling his eyes. *Yeah, because that was*

going to happen.

"Sit down and shut up," Aizawa groaned, rubbing his eyes tiredly as the class slowly began to find their seats again, all tired and exhausted from the day's escapades. Izuku and Hatsume stood at the front of the classroom next to him, and the shorter boy couldn't help but feel relieved that All Might had already left. He definitely wasn't ready for a conversation with the man, and by the way he looked at Izuku throughout the class, he knew he'd been recognized. No doubt because Izuku knew his secret.

Once the room had settled and everyone was quiet, Aizawa nodded. "You all did well for your first trial. All Might has already given you your feedback from him, but now you'll be getting your feedback from our support students. Listen carefully, take notes, because I'll be watching to see how much you improve based on today's trial."

With that, he left the floor open to Izuku and Hatsume. Hatsu immediately launched into a very excited, and very *fast*, lecture on how everyone used their various support items (if they had any). Obviously she skipped over anyone who didn't have items, and she was careful not to suggest items either, just as Aizawa had asked. Then it was Izuku's turn.

They'd agreed during the trial that Hatsume would take control of their item evaluations, while Izuku would take control of their strategic evaluations. Part of him was a bit nervous when he felt everyone's eyes on him, but once he settled into the analysis part of his brain, the words came quick and easy to him. Just like when he was analyzing villain and hero fights with Kaachan on the streets, or when they were watching various news reports or documentaries.

Instead of going student by student, he diligently went through each trial instead. Pointing out ways they could have worked better and things that could have gone wrong. "Shouto, your technique was quick and efficient, but ultimately it could have been potentially dangerous. Without knowing the type of bomb that was planted, the instant freezing could have set it off without you being aware of that. In addition, while we knew going into these trials there would be no civilians to rescue, it should still be something you're thinking about. Freezing the whole building over could have put innocents in danger without you knowing it." Shouto had watched him during his evaluation carefully, nodding along with his points and drinking in the words before thanking Izuku for his observations and promising to

be more aware the next time. “Uraraka, your plan with Iida was very impressive, hiding the bomb amongst the crates and then floating random objects throughout the room as distractions and possible ammo. However, your fault lies with your backup, that is to say, you didn’t have one. Once Shinsou took control of you, the match was pretty much lost. Iida, you too did well adjusting to the plan going off the rails, however you need to pace yourself more. You burnt yourself out too fast and it ultimately lost you the match. Kaachan’s stamina is impressive, but you never know who you’ll be going up against. Only burn yourself out if you are one hundred percent sure it’s going to get you the win.”

He cycled through the others easily, commenting on Kaachan and Shinsou winning, though with little to no actual teamwork. (Kaachan had not been happy about Izuku all but admitting they won by luck), then moving onto a similar lecture for Kaminari on burning himself out too quickly. Asui (“call me Tsu”) impressed Izuku the most with her planning skills and he made sure to tell her so, though they would need to work around Dark Shadow during certain situations considering he is difficult to control in darkness. They hadn’t planned enough on him losing them the match.

Due to an uneven amount of students, names were drawn for who got to participate twice, so Izuku informed Shinsou dutifully that he and Momo did extremely well in their round against Kaminari and Jirou considering they weren’t offensive fighters like those two. However, Momo’s ability could have been better utilized for offense and Shinsou should have known better than to go after Jirou with his quirk. Kaminari was the talker and would have been a much easier target.

In the end, everyone seemed properly chastised, though all equally excited about learning how to better themselves. The classroom was abuzz with chatter and discussions, everyone trying to come up with better scenarios and chiming in with their own thoughts on other’s battles.

“You did good.”

Izuku blinked, glancing up from where he was sat with the Squad to see Kaachan leaning over him with a smirk. “Huh?”

“Your analysis shit,” he elaborated with a roll of the eyes. “I told you that you’d be good at this nerd shit. Today proved it. You don’t need a fucking quirk to make you better.”

A brush of cold air came up behind him and Izuku glanced over his other shoulder to see Shouto looking down at him, a rare smile on his lips. “I agree. It’s nice to see you in your element. Different than when we were watching the exams, but better in a way. You really seem to thrive in analysis.”

Izuku couldn’t help but blush, glancing down at his lap in the hopes that the chair might open and swallow him up. “Jeez guys, flattery will not get you nicer observations,” he mumbled from behind his hands.

Kaachan laughed, his hand heavy as he mussed up Izuku’s hair, and just behind his boisterous cackle, Izuku could hear the soft, low timber of Shouto’s chuckle.

The sounds mixed well together.

Chapter End Notes

> Thank you guys SO MUCH for your amazing comments! I literally thrive off of them. You're all the best!
> The next chapter should hopefully be up soon, but I make no promises with the holiday being tomorrow. It may not be up until Friday.
>
> On another note, I know fuck all about mechanics or inventing or whatever. So basically anything Hatsume or Izuku say about this stuff is going to be coming out of my ass. If I get something wrong or it doesn't make sense, feel free to gently correct me, but I'm kind of just going to wing it. #comicbookscience

Chapter 7: Wildfire

Chapter Summary

> Part one of the USJ fight in which the boys pine, Izuku is a disaster bi, Shouto is adorably demisexual, and Katsuki is gay af.

Chapter Notes

> Hi everyone and once again thanks for the amazing support! I'm having so much fun with this story and I can't wait to get more into the Kitsune lore and Katsuki's heritage and powers. Enjoy the new chapter, because we're getting the USJ!
>
> PS I think this chapter is a tiny bit shorter than usual, but it's also two parts sooooo.... sorry lol

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Friday came faster than any of them were really prepared for. Permission slips were signed, uniforms were repaired and cleaned, support items were settled away nicely in their chrome cases, and students were filed into the waiting bus. Izuku was sat next to Shouto, and Kaachan was in the seat in front them, grumpily sat next to Kirishima, the rest of the Squad spread around the back of the bus like they owned it.

It was loud, with so many excited students packed into a small metal vehicle, but Izuku found he kind of enjoyed the chaos. It was exciting, happy. They were already discussing possible tactics and scenarios that they might be put in based on what little they knew about the facility.

Izuku and Hatsume would be left with the teachers in the observation room, though he didn't know what teacher it was going to be yet. From what he knew, All Might was supposed to have joined them for the field trip, but was replaced last minute by Mr. Aizawa who looked incredibly upset at his schedule being interrupted. Past that, he knew one other teacher would be meeting them at the event, but no more than that.

"This is my first field trip," Shouto said quietly from Izuku's side, gaze moving from the window to peek shyly at the green-haired boy.

Izuku blinked, eyes widening. "What? You never went on a field trip

before? Not even in middle school?"

Shouto shook his head. "I had private tutors, I never went to middle school. My father is very particular about my schooling," he told him. "I am…" the boy paused, fingers twitching in his lap as he thought about what to say, how to form the right words in his head and spit them out of his mouth. Izuku noticed the dual-haired hero did this a lot. He wasn't used to expressing himself or confiding in others, and even though he'd come a long way in the past month of school, he was still hesitant about speaking. Like he'd be punished for saying the wrong thing. It made Izuku sad, but he stayed patient with the boy, not wanting to push. "Excited," he finished with a satisfied nod. "I know it's just training, but it feels… exciting to me. Something new to do with friends. Is that… right?" He wondered aloud, glancing at Izuku with a hesitant look.

He's like a kitten, Izuku decided as he assured the other boy that he too was excited to hang out with his friends and see everyone in action. Shouto was like an adopted kitten, hesitant and shy in a new home, a little jittery sometimes. It's like he didn't quite know how to act around other humans, and Izuku found it sad as much as he found it adorable. Though if he'd had tutors growing up, he probably didn't interact with many kids his age. And with his dad being a pro hero, Izuku suspected Shouto probably wasn't allowed out of the house very often for his own safety. In fact, he didn't have to suspect anything. He knew Endeavor didn't let him out much because anytime Izuku and Kaachan tried to get him to come over, the boy's dad would say no. Shouto hadn't been over to their place since the first time with mom.

Still, the younger boy was determined to bring Shouto out of his shell one way or another. He just had to figure out how to do it.

Unfortunately for him, one hour long bus ride was not enough time to dig into the beautiful creature that was Todoroki Shouto, especially with the boisterous crew of heroes-in-trainingn around them. Izuku could barely get a word in with his friend before Kirishima or Kaminari would drag him into some conversation or argument they were having. Then Mina demanded he let her braid his hair halfway through the journey and so he was pushed out of his seat and into Sero's, the tape hero eagerly ready to strike up a conversation with a slightly confused Shouto.

By the time they made it to the USJ, Izuku had his hair pulled into half a French braid, the rest of his curls left dangling around his neck,

and every girl in the bus was cooing at him. He thought he might have seen a blush on Kaachan's cheeks, but the blonde had his head turned so he couldn't be sure. There was *definitely* one on Shouto's.

And that was something he was *not* ready to explore just yet, the strange rolling in his stomach when he looked at both boys. He'd gotten used to it with Kaachan in middle school, when girls started looking soft and boys started looking pretty, but he hadn't really known what it meant. He just knew that he liked it when Kaachan smiled, that it sent giggles through his tummy and getting the boy to laugh became an almost obsessive goal. They'd always been close, what with them living together and Kaachan's fox being more cuddly than he was willing to admit. But it was different now, when Izuku wanted to be close to the blonde, to spend time with him just because, to see him smile as much as he possibly could.

Izuku didn't really know what it meant until Shouto. He hadn't known the dual-haired boy nearly as long, of course, but there was still a bubbly feeling in his tummy when he saw the usually stoic boy smile, even if it was a small one. There was still this need to protect him when he'd show up one day already tired from 'training' with his dad. (Izuku had his suspicions about that, but nothing concrete yet to make accusations.) And he'd been joking the other day, but he knew Kaachan liked Shouto too. Maybe not like Izuku did (Izuku wasn't even sure how deep his own affections went), but he knew the blonde was fond towards the other boy. He could see it in the way the Kitsune generally allowed Shouto in their presence. Or rather, Izuku's presence.

It was a little strange, because it wasn't like Izuku didn't hang out with other people. It was just that… well Kaachan was protective. He got twitchy if someone stayed to close to Izuku or his Mom for too long, if someone started touching them or hanging all over them. ("It makes you smell weird, I don't like it.") Kaachan usually ended up snuggling up with them later in the day, his fox form draped over whoever it was like a blanket. Izuku assumed it was to 'mark' his scent or something, to make sure they smelled like him, like home.

Yet he never seemed to care when Shouto got too close. Granted, Shouto wasn't big on physical affection or touching, but Kaachan never tensed or growled when Izuku pressed his shoulder up against the other boy's during lunch, or when Shouto would walk Izuku to class after lunch sometimes. And he never seemed to demand snuggling after days with Shouto. (Sometimes he did, but it was usually because of someone else.

“You let that stupid blonde kid in your class hang all over you again, didn’t you?”

“Did you hang out with Gravity Girl today? You stink.”

“I swear if that dumb flying guy touches your hair one more goddamn time, I’ll kill him.”

That kind of stuff, but Shouto never seemed to be an issue.

Come to think of it, most of the Squad didn’t seem to be an issue anymore. Early on they were, Kaachan hated any of them touching or getting too close to him and Izuku, but over the past month or so the little greenette noticed he wasn’t as protective around them. Izuku had his theory as to why, but never dared voice it… not until Kaachan himself was ready to admit it.

“Oi, nerd, you gonna sit here all day or are you gonna get on your damn feet and walk?”

Izuku jumped, glancing up to see the subject of his thoughts leaned over him, arms braced on the seats to bracket Izuku in, Shouto stood waiting just behind him. He didn’t feel trapped though, it felt more like… like home, in a way.

Kaachan smelt like a wildfire, kind of woodsy with a hint of sparks and flames. Izuku loved that smell. It was comforting and he let it settle around him with a smile.

“I swear if you don’t get up, I’m leaving you here,” the blonde growled, though even as he said it, he grabbed at Izuku’s shirt and yanked him onto his feet. “Let’s fucking *go*.”

Shouto knew it was technically supposed to be a training simulation, but he had at least expected his first field trip to be *fun*. Izuku had been so excited for it, and now that he thought about it, Katsuki had been excited about it too, in his own way. Shouto could barely sleep the night before in his excitement (even if it was more dulled than the other two’s).

He hadn’t expected the villains appearing, or Mr. Aizawa to burst straight into battle on his own. One man against an entire army. Shouto wanted to fight, wanted to help. That’s what heroes did, but he told them to leave. He told them to escape. It was more important for him to get his other classmates to safety.

The dual-haired boy barely had time to register Katsuki launching himself forward in attack before the suffocating feeling of darkness engulfed them, his stomach lurching with the sudden weightlessness that came with falling.

Falling.

He was falling from far too high, staring up at the black and purple portal above him as it fizzled and puttered out of existence. Kirishima was above him, already twisting his body to face the ground, and in turn, face Shouto. There was a momentary panic in his eyes before he locked onto something behind (*underneath*) Shouto and his face solidified into determination and understanding.

“Hold on!” Kirishima yelled, twisting his body into a spin and angling himself until he all but crashed into Shouto, solid arms wrapping around him tight. Shouto returned the hold, though the impact knocked them into a spin that sent his head reeling. Lucky for him, he could hear explosions below him.

Katsuki.

Before he really registered what he was doing, he was reaching a hand out blindly in the direction of the sounds, knowing that even his ice wouldn’t help him in a fall from this distance, and Kirishima’s hardening probably wouldn’t protect his fall either. A sweaty hand grabbed hard onto his wrist, his own fingers latching on- not desperately, but assuredly- as they came to a few jerky stops.

His shoulder protested the sudden movements, but he didn’t dare let go.

“Gonna be a hard ass landing,” Katsuki grunted from above him, using his opposite hand to direct their path and slow their decent with a series of short bursts explosions. “Try and get Kiri on bottom when we land,” he ordered, not bothering to wait for a response before he aimed them towards the ground.

And the landing was hard. They hit the blacktop with a grunt, limbs tangling and bodies tucked inwards to protect their heads. Kirishima had just managed to harden himself the moment Shouto twisted him to land first, protecting himself and Katsuki from most of the damage they may have incurred otherwise.

“That’s gonna be sore tomorrow,” the redhead grunted as they all stumbled to their feet, but Shouto wasn’t listening because-

“Izuku? Izuku!” Katsuki was next to him in an instant, glancing around the area they’d landed in as if expecting to see the other boy, his voice more panicked than Shouto had ever heard it. “Where is he? Where *is he?”*

They’d landed in an urban area, the air around them hot and sticky from the flames that were already licking up across the buildings. By the smell of them, Shouto could tell they were artificial flames, ignited by some sort of accelerant and no doubt part of the training and not the villain attack. (At least he hoped so.) But the fire was the least of their worries.

Because they were surrounded.

A quick glance around the area told him their other classmates were nowhere nearby, including Izuku, so they were on their own against the (roughly) thirty grown villains that were swarming the urban city streets on all sides of them. Shouto wasn’t necessarily worried for himself, or the boys with him for that matter. Out of the entire class, they were probably the strongest and Shouto himself was the most experienced in physical and quirk training. His father had made sure of that. He was more worried about Katsuki and the fact that Izuku was nowhere to be seen.

Much to the boy’s surprise however, Katsuki stuck at his side. Part of him had expected the blonde to go rushing into battle the moment a bad guy showed their face, desperate for a fight, desperate to track down their green-haired friend. Instead, he plastered himself to Shouto’s back, shoulder blades against shoulder blades, his warmth sharp and welcoming against the chill of Shouto’s skin. Kirishima was nearby, also facing away from him so they made a sort of oddly shaped triangle.

The three of them against an army.

“There’s what, thirty, forty of them?” Kirishima asked, and Shouto was impressed at how steady his voice sounded. “I think we can take them-“

“Fuckin’ course we can,” Katsuki interrupted with an animalistic snarl. “Fucking extras have nothing on us.”

Shouto hummed, eyes flickering back and forth between the various villains, calculating, assessing, strategizing. “Am I right to assume we want to incapacitate them as fast as possible?” He asked, head turning just slightly towards the other two boys but never letting his eyes

leave the villains.

“Fucking *yes*. Is that even a question? We have to find the others,” Katsuki growled.

Shouto didn’t have to see the blonde to know the ‘others’ he was talking about was Izuku. “Very well, stay close to me. I will do my best to incapacitate them, but if any of them have mental or projectile quirks, it may not matter. I will leave those ones to you,” Shouto informed them.

Using his ice was second nature to him, as easy as breathing. He barely had to think before his stance shifted, his foot twisting just slightly to send a wave of ice across the ground in a spiral around the three of them. It spread out almost instantly, and though some villains attempted to run or dodge the incoming attack, the instant the ice got near enough to them, their bodies- from their feet to their torsos- were completely encased, prohibiting movement entirely. It was a powerful move, one that took more of his energy than he cared to admit, but the vast majority of the villains around them, as well as the fires and buildings, had been taken out of the equation in a matter of seconds, so he ignored the creak in his bones and the chill on his tongue as he turned towards Katsuki for the first time since they’d landed.

His stomach made a weird tumbling feeling when he saw the emotion in the blonde’s eyes, something akin to shock, pride, and admiration, but it didn’t last. It couldn’t last. Not with the situation they were in.

“We got fliers!”

Both Katsuki and Shouto turned at Kirishima’s voice to see a few other villains heading their way, having escaped the ice attack easily by taking to the air.

Katsuki snorted, cracking his knuckles as his lips spread into a maniacal grin. “I’ve got these ones.”

And so they went. The three of them worked well together, Shouto incapacitating where he could, and Kirishima and Katsuki being the front men when Shouto couldn’t. It wasn’t that he didn’t know hand to hand combat, it was simply that their quirks were better suited for close combat than his, and Shouto knew better than to let something as petty as pride get in his way in a life or death situation.

Katsuki, who Shouto would have expected to love a good fight, was unnervingly focused. He had a scary sort of grin on his face, but it was

determined. No-nonsense. He had to get to Izuku and he wasn't going to let anything get in his way. Still, he kept close to Shouto, which surprised him. Anytime Katsuki had to run up and fight someone, or back Kirishima up, he'd always drop back to Shouto's side. Like a guard dog on a leash. (And he was *not* going to tell the blonde he'd ever thought that.)

Back when he'd first met Izuku, Shouto remembered him saying that the way someone was fighting during the entrance exam was beautiful. He knew now that the boy had been talking about Katsuki, and he couldn't help but agree. He'd seen the boy during training and quirk assessments, but this was the first time seeing him go all out in a fight. Even during the battle trial he didn't get to fight for long. So being able to see him so focused, so in his element, was intoxicating. Shouto didn't want to take his eyes away from the blonde.

He moved with a feline sort of grace, practically hopping from villain to villain, body twisting in ways Shouto didn't think possible to avoid attacks. It made him even more curious what the boy's second quirk was. He'd known the two Midoriyas for over a month now and still they hadn't told him. Shouto didn't blame them. He wanted to know, but he knew better than to disrespect someone's privacy like that, especially when they didn't bring up his own second quirk even if they knew what it was.

Still, if it's what gave Katsuki the absolute grace he held in a battlefield, Shouto couldn't help but think whatever it was had to be just as beautiful.

They were able to move through the arena in easy time, though it was clear it was taking a lot out of them. Katsuki was panting beside him and Kirishima was starting to bruise in areas where the hardening was starting to soften from overuse. Shouto didn't have to see himself to know there was frost dancing its way up the side of his throat.

His stamina was usually better, it had to be, fighting his father, but he wasn't used to containment and large area attacks. It was something he could do easily, but not repeatedly like he was. Not with so many enemies, not with spreading the ice out as far as he did. He was starting to get tired and he couldn't afford that.

Not with Izuku still out there.

Because Katsuki wasn't the only one who was worried. The greenette wasn't helpless, Shouto knew that. The boy could fight, and he had

genius-level intelligence and strategy skills at his side, but they were overwhelmed by sheer numbers. There was only so much Izuku could do on his own against villains with so many dangerous quirks.

He could only hope the boy wasn't alone.

"Woah stop!" A hardened arm shot out and smacked Katsuki in the chest, stopping the blonde cold as he turned a sharpened sneer in the redhead's direction. "Hey, don't growl at me, look!"

The other two boys followed where Kirishima was pointing away from the front entrance where they'd started and towards the center of the facility.

They were close enough now to see the scene fully, and they were elevated a bit compared to the open area they were looking at, so it only took a matter of seconds for Shouto (and no doubt Katsuki) to zero in on a head of bright green hair.

He wasn't alone, though Shouto wasn't sure if that was a good thing or not. Hatsume was sprawled out in Izuku's lap and though Shouto couldn't see if she was wounded from so far away, the way her body was limp across the ground and being held up completely by Izuku's arms was a pretty good indicator. In front of them was Shinsou, his body crouched and ready for a fight, his capture weapon tight between his fingers, but he wasn't moving, stuck in a stare down with the white haired villain in front of him, disembodied hands wrapped around him in various places, hiding his face and throat and arms.

The most worrying however, was the enormous creature behind the white haired villain. It was disgusting, perhaps three or four times larger than All Might, it's brain exposed and face pulled into a wicked looking beak.

And it had Mr. Aizawa underneath it.

Shouto grabbed onto Katsuki's hand before he was even thinking, halting the blonde from launching himself forward like he no doubt wanted to do. "We need a plan," Shouto explained, ignoring the angry look Katsuki shot him. "We go barging in without one, we may interrupt whatever Shinsou is doing and make it even worse."

"Izuku is down there," Katsuki growled, the sound deeper than Shouto had ever heard it, and the dual-haired boy swore he saw fangs peeking out from between pink lips when the blonde sneered. "And Aizawa is down! We can't just stand here!"

“That’s a lot of blood, bro,” Kirishima muttered beside them, shifting anxiously on his feet. “But there’s no way we can take that big thing on. Not if Aizawa couldn’t.”

Shouto agreed, but there was no way they could walk away either. They needed to do something, he just didn’t know what. “It appears that Shinsou has the other villain under control. And Izuku looks unhurt for now. Our priorities need to be to get them out, not to fight the villains. But if Shinsou is focusing on the white haired one, then he could very likely be more dangerous than the big one. We cannot interrupt that without more knowledge. Katsuki, can you contact Izuku?”

It was a long shot, Shouto knew it. He didn’t know anything about Katsuki’s other quirk, but he knew the two boys were connected. The blonde always seemed to know when Izuku was anxious or emotional, could find the boy anywhere he was in the school whether they’d agreed to meet up or not. There was a connection there that was deeper than just knowing each other for their entire lives. Something Shouto hoped they could use.

“The fuck? I didn’t exactly bring my cell phone, you dumbass!”

But Shouto shook his head, fingers tightening around Katsuki’s. (He’d have to evaluate the fact that the boy hadn’t pulled away from him yet later). “You two have a connection. I’ve seen it. Can you use that?”

He could tell Katsuki wanted to snap at him again, but something akin to surprise and consideration settled into his red-gold eyes and his face scrunched up at the words, like he hadn’t even considered it an option. He was silent for much longer than Shouto would have liked but after a moment his fingers tightened slightly and he tensed. “I’ve never used it like that before.”

“Can you try?”

The blonde didn’t answer, only turned back towards the scene in front of them and stared- well… more like glared. His gaze pierced through the air like icicles and Shouto could see the twitch in Katsuki’s jaw as he clenched his teeth. There was a shift of the air behind them, but when Shouto spared it a glance, there was nothing there. “Look at me, dammit,” Katsuki growled under his breath, fingers clenching tight enough around Shouto’s that the taller boy was sure he’d have bruises later. He couldn’t find it in himself to complain. “Look at me. Come Izu, get out of your damn head for once and look at me.”

The air shifted again, the sharp scent of a forest fire mixed with the scent of electricity and Shouto almost expected to look up and see Kaminari headed their way. Instead, red eyes found viridian as Izuku glanced their way, eyes wide and mouth open in surprise. He still couldn't tell if the boy was hurt or not, but there was a calm sort of panic on his face when he found them in the distance.

Shouto watched as the green haired boy raised his hands (red and dark with blood) and signed something in quick, jerky motions.

"What is it, what'd he say?"

"You guys know sign language?" Kirishima asked quietly beside them, a bit of awe on the back of his words.

"We learned when my quirk first surfaced. Hand guy is the boss. Izu says they were after All Might but he's not here," Katsuki answered quietly, shoulder pressing to Shouto's like he was struggling to keep himself standing. He waited as Izuku signed some more before nodding. "Shinsou has him controlled for now but he isn't sure how long he can keep it going. Hatsume is injured but not badly."

Shouto nodded, glancing back at the scene. "And Izuku?"

Katsuki *tsk*ed and shook his head, "didn't say, but he's bleeding, I can smell it from here."

He didn't question it, and neither did Kirishima, but there was a sick sort of twist in his gut at those words. Maybe it was simply because he had made such quick friends with the two boys, but the idea of either of them getting injured made Shouto sick in the stomach. He wanted to move. Wanted to rush forward and gather Izuku in his arms, pull him away from the danger as fast as he could. But he couldn't, because what he'd told Katsuki was true. They needed a plan or they'd end up putting him in even more danger. It didn't mean he had to like it.

After a few more hand signs, Katsuki took a deep breath and shook himself. "Legs went to go get the teachers. We just need to stall until backup gets here."

As soon as Katsuki said it, there was a loud bang coming from the entrance and all eyes found the cloud of dust gathering where the doors had once been. Emerging from the cloud was none other than All Might himself.

“Fear not! For I am here!”

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter will be from Izuku's POV leading up to the same point.

Fear not if you don't quite understand Katsuki's powers yet, we'll be exploring them a bit more soon. I have plans.

Chapter 8: Another One

Chapter Summary

> Pt. 2 of the USJ fight, in which Hatsume is Mary Poppins, Shouta is *tired*, and Shinsou is a simp.

Chapter Notes

> Okay so this chapter is also a tiny bit shorter than normal because it's the second half of the last chapter. But I kind of low key love how this one turned out so I hope you all love it too!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku!”

A body slammed into his just as the darkness clouded his vision, knocking him backwards and into the ground as soon as the portal that swallowed them up closed. There was a sharp pain in the back of his head from smacking against brick and he let out a low moan, fingers clutching at the body on top of him.

“Get off-“ he slurred, vision swimming almost violently as he pushed and pushed until he was able to roll over, stomach churning and chest burning as he dry heaved. After what felt like hours, he managed to choke out a “What happened?” to whoever had grabbed onto him earlier.

A hand settled on the boy’s back and Izuku blinked, twisting his head to see a head of lilac hair knelt above him. “Villains,” Shinsou responded lowly, wide eyes already searching the area around them. “Aizawa went after them and we were all separated. Some sort of black mist it looked like.”

“Teleportation quirk,” Izuku confirmed, taking in his surroundings slowly. They were in the center of the arena near the fountain, not too far from the base of the stairs where they began. Which was a relief because he wasn’t sure what might have happened if he and Shinsou had been deposited in one of the disaster zones. “If Iida was able to get out then he’s no doubt getting backup. We just have to stay low and wait it out-“

Izuku paused, ears prickling sharply at the sound of a groan. He turned, glancing past Shinsou to see a lump of pink and blue off to the side.

“Hatsume!”

He was at her side in an instant, the girl already pushing herself up and clutching at her head. The goggles she usually wore were cracked and there was a small trail of blood dripping from her forehead where the glass had imbedded itself, but she looked otherwise unharmed. “Izuku? Where are we?”

“Center of the facility,” Shinsou supplied, crouched low beside them as he peaked over a nearby bush. “There are villains *everywhere*, I don’t know if we’ll be able to stay out of sight forever but-“ he paused, eyes squinting towards the entrance before he reared back and ducked. “*Shit.* Creep alert. Aizawa is heading this way and there’s some handy guy and his monster body guard standing up on the center dais. I figure he’s the leader, he’s just standing there watching.”

Izuku spared a glance over the bush as well, hands still holding onto Hatsume’s shoulders as she steadied herself.

His head was pounding, the lights around him bright and obtrusive, but he forced himself to focus, squinting past the pain as he watched Aizawa down villain after villain without breaking a sweat. If it wasn’t a life or death situation, he’d be absolutely drooling over the sheer *ability* the man held.

“He’s going to try and take the guy out on his own. He’s handling himself pretty well so far, but if that guy’s the boss-“ Izuku trailed off, shaking his head and chewing on his lip. “We’re no match for real time villains, especially me, but-“ he shook his head again and groaned. “He’s going up against an army- we can’t just let him do it on his own…”

Eraserhead was an underground hero, and while Izuku knew who he was and what he could do, the pro was never someone Izuku had the opportunity to properly analyze. There was a good reason for that. Underground heroes tended to work more in secret, they were people with quirks that weren’t typically good for general public heroics. People like Shinsou, who had been looking into becoming an underground hero himself. Their identities were usually kept pretty classified, their quirks even more so. They worked more in infiltration, information gathering, more spy and undercover work than battling

villains in the street. So while Izuku knew that Eraserhead was perfectly capable, he had no idea whether the man could take on an army of villains on his own, much less the massive creature that stood next to the silver-haired leader.

“We need to help,” he decided after a moment, “but we need to be extremely careful on how we do it. We can’t get in his way. Having him worried about us is just going to be more dangerous because he’ll be distracted. We need to take stock of the situation at hand.” Izuku pressed himself up against the bushes and settled down onto his knees, the others huddling around him silently. “First off, injuries. Shinsou?” The boy shook his head and Izuku nodded. “I hit my head after the teleportation. From the pain and the dizziness, I’m assuming I have a concussion. Past that, I think I’m okay. Hatsu?”

The pink haired girl shook her head and gestured towards her goggles. “Bit scratched up, but I think I’m okay. No concussion that I can tell, and I think I’d recognize one with how often we get blown up in the lab.”

“Good, what about supplies? None of us have battle quirks, so we need to be careful about how we approach things,” Izuku said, silently wishing he had some sort of weapon like Shinsou’s capture scarf. He’d been playing around with ideas, but nothing solid yet. (He was kicking himself for that now though.)

“I have my scarf,” Shinsou said, tugging at the grey fabric before gesturing to his belt where he had a few pouches attached. “Some pain meds, basic first aid, nutrition bars, and a cell phone. That’s it for me.”

Izuku nodded, not having expected much from any of them.

He should have known better.

“Okay so-“ Hatsume said quietly but with way more excitement than she should have been able to muster. She tugged a backpack off of her shoulders and plopped it down between them. “I’ve got the basics, flashlights, tools, snacks, water, some gasoline, and a lighter. I’ve got three of Midoriya’s grenades, still filled,” she said, tugging them out and placing them at Izuku’s feet. (He was *not* going to tell Kaachan that the girl hadn’t given him all of them). “I’ve also got some flash grenades, a flare, an emergency radio, some random toys that *probably* aren’t safe enough to test out yet. Umm, what else… Oh! Izu I have this for you. I was still working on it but I brought it in case

we had time on the bus on the way back," she grumbled, shoving practically her whole arm into the backpack (*seriously, how big was that thing inside?)* and pulling out what looked like a glove and a dark green visor.

The glove itself was white with green accents, fitted to sit flush against the skin when he tugged it on, and there was a large bracer around the wrist, little metal sensors extending out of it and onto the fingers. He wiggled his hand in curiosity before glancing at the girl with a raised brow. "How dangerous is this if it's untested?"

"It will definitely shatter your arm if I did any calculations wrong," she said, unbothered. Then again, she usually sounded unbothered even *after* something blew up so…

He groaned before slipping the visor over his eyes. "And what's it do?" At the sound of his voice, the visor lit up, dark green glass shifting until little holograms began to appear on the Heads Up Display in front of him.

"So they are programed together, but the visor isn't necessary to use the glove. I wanted to figure out something with lightning, but I didn't have time to work out the right calculations for energy output," she explained, grabbing his hand and twisting it to show the underside of the bracer. "Basically the inside of this is all mechanical, so try not to damage the actual wrist component. Ideally, it acts as an air cannon. Highly pressurized energy pushed out through these holes here," she said, pointing out the different openings around the circular wrist bracer. "The metal parts on the fingers are sensors. You can control the air output based on how you move your fingers. Each finger closed is a stronger current. Full fist is full power. Got it?"

Izuku nodded in understanding, the idea pretty basic all things considered, though extremely advanced technology for such a small support item. In front of him, the images changed as he turned his gaze on her. Her name, quirk, and basic profile appeared in golden letters beside her face, a target circling her like a sniper.

"The goggles are just a basic HUD I assume," he deduced, bobbing his head when she grinned. "Hooked up to a database so I get basic information."

"Usually," she corrected, holding a finger up. "Todoroki said the alarms were probably being blocked, so I don't think the visor will be able to access the international databases. Right now you're only able

to access the profiles I have programed in. So anyone in the class. Past that, it can help with targeting and recognizing threats, distance, velocity, that kind of stuff. It's a basic HUD but since I connected it to the gauntlet, it probably has some glitches in it. So don't rely too heavily on it."

Izuku nodded. "It at least gives me something to protect myself with.

"Past that, I've got my usual," Hatsume continued, tapping her boots with a knuckle and pulling her electric bo-staff off her belt.

Shinsou frowned as he peeked over the bushes. "Whatever we do, we should do it soon. Aizawa's getting his ass kicked."

Which was true. They all popped their heads up to see their teacher all but dangling from the monster's grip, his elbow a mess of blood and... decaying skin. It looked incredibly painful and Izuku could feel the bile rising in his throat from just the sight. If it wasn't for the erratic heartbeat monitor that appeared on his HUD when he glanced at the teacher, Izuku would have thought the man dead.

"Okay. Okay." He muttered, the words more to draw himself back into strategy mode than anything else, but he nodded, kneeling back down to face his friends. "We need to get Mr. Aizawa out of here. That needs to be our priority. Forget stalling until backup gets here, he may not make it that long. I don't know how accurate this thing is," he said, gesturing towards his visor, "but it's not lookin good. Shinsou, how long can you use your quirk for?"

"As long as the person doesn't take any damage, or someone doesn't physically shake them out of it, I can hold it for a couple hours. Gives me an awful migraine and I'm out of commission for the next day or so, but I can do it if I need to," the boy answered easily. "I haven't seen the big guy say anything the entire time, so my best bet is the leader. He's been jabbering on the whole time, but I can't tell what he's saying."

Izuku nodded, though his fists clenched in his lap. "Do you think you can do this?"

He wasn't questioning Shinsou's abilities. He would never. Izuku knew better than anyone how strong people could be, how hard Shinsou worked on his quirk. It wasn't a question of whether he could use the quirk, but if he could face up against the leader. Because regardless of how strong this class was, how smart Izuku and Hatsu were, regardless of everything... they were still kids. They were

inexperienced in *real* battle. Izuku wouldn't blame Shinsou if he was scared, hell Izuku was terrified. But isn't this what heroes did? They fought even if they knew the battle was skewed in someone else's favor? Even though they knew they were outmatched, knew that they might not make it. Heroes fought, because if there was even the slightest chance of being able to save someone, they had to take it.

Shinsou knew that too, and though his usually dead-looking expression didn't change, Izuku could see the determination in his eyes when violet met viridian.

"I can do it."

"Okay then. Here's the plan-"

Problem children.

That's what he had. He had problem children who didn't know when to *run away*.

Shouta had stopped feeling around the time Shigaraki had grabbed his elbow. Logically he knew it was the adrenaline pumping through his veins, knew the numbness of his limbs would fade eventually and everything would *hurt*. But seeing Shinsou stand, stepping out from behind the bushes where he'd seen three of his students hiding earlier, sent his heart racing painfully in his chest.

This kid, who'd worked so hard to get into this hero course, who'd practiced day and night, staying hours and hours after school with Shouta to learn his capture weapon, who deserved to be a hero more than most kids he had ever taught before (current class withstanding), was striding across the courtyard like he owned it.

And there was fear in his eyes. Shouta would be worried if there wasn't. But to those who didn't know him, he looked just as dead as always, and the eraser hero couldn't help but be a little proud at his little prodigy.

He'd be more proud if the kid had *stayed away*.

"What's this? A secret love child?" Shigaraki asked, voice scratchy and lilted, beady red eyes finding Shouta's for just a moment before finding Shinsou again. "You come to save your dad, kid? Sorry to

break it to you, but you're not even on my level."

Shinsou hummed, shoving his hands in the pockets of his dark purple jumpsuit, fitted similar to Shouta's own, and shrugging his shoulders like he wasn't bothered at all by the chaos around them. Shouta knew what he was doing, knew that Shigaraki didn't know the boy's quirk and this was honestly a truly *good* plan. He just wished it wasn't *necessary*. "Yeah? And what level is that?" Shinsou asked, voice just loud enough to carry across the open area. "I thought I was coming out here for the final boss, but you barely look like a cheap sidekick. Am I supposed to take you on?"

"Why you little-"

Jackpot.

Shigaraki froze instantly, red eyes dulling and darkening without warning. Just empty, dead. Under control.

"Mr. Aizawa," Shinsou called out carefully, no intonation in his voice since Shouta knew he was trying to concentrate. "Please close your eyes."

He didn't hesitate, didn't question. He squeezed his eyes closed a second before a loud blast went off above his head. A gust of air grabbed at him, pulling him from the grip of the monster and he tumbled, rolling in a pained heap across the ground. Small hands gripped at his shoulders and pulled until he was sitting upright, head lolling back onto a short shoulder.

"You can open your eyes now," the green-haired Midoriya said from behind him. When Shouta did as he asked, the small student gave him a shaky grin. "We don't have much time. We don't know how long that thing will stay blinded," he said already pushing himself to his feet and pulling Shouta up with him. Something tugged at the pro's other arm and his head lolled to the side to see Hatsume hoist him up on the other side. "Can you walk?"

"Problem child," Shouta mumbled, forcing his feet under him as he struggled to maintain his own weight. The adrenaline was still settled in his bones, but he could feel it fading fast, the pain in his elbow and head rising to a sharp roar. "You were supposed to get out."

"They have someone with a teleportation quirk," Izuku informed him with a shake of the head. "Separated all the students from Thirteen. We got spat out here right before you showed up. Don't know where

the others are yet. Shinsou, how's it going?"

The purple haired student hadn't moved since Shouta saw him first. He remained still as Midoriya and Hatsume began leading him behind the boy.

"It'd be better if you got out of here," Shinsou replied slowly but sharply.

They didn't get the chance to reply before something swiped blindly at them from behind.

Pain blossomed sharp in Shouta's ribs as he was sent flying, crashing hard into a short wall before rolling a few feet towards the water nearby. There was a loud cry, Midoriya calling out Hatsume's name, but the teacher found it hard to focus past the roaring in his ears. Something large and dangerous gripped the back of his head, digging his face into the brick beneath him and he groaned.

He struggled to open his eyes, his head growing foggy and body growing weak. *Stay awake. Stay awake. Stay awake. Your students are in danger.*

Midoriya was crumbled up behind Shinsou, his body knelt protectively over where Hatsume lay in his lap. There was blood on them both, but he couldn't focus long enough to see how injured they were or whose it was.

Stay awake.

Midoriya's head shoots up and glances in the opposite direction.

Stay awake.

He raises his hands to sign something.

Fight back.

There's a loud crash.

Fight. Back.

Katsuki was in pain.

It wasn't his sore muscles, or the heat in his palms though. It wasn't the two or three scrapes he'd managed to get from a few villains that had gotten too close. No it was all over. It was his entire body, screaming and pushing at him, like his skin was too tight and was demanding to be clawed off. It was a new pain, but it didn't mean he didn't recognize it.

The fox wanted *out*.

And it felt like it was ready to tear him apart to do it.

"Uh bro-"

All Might was below them, fighting the big monster beak chicken *thing*, but even Katsuki could tell it wasn't going well. The creature was holding out against All Might without even breaking a sweat. It was just as fast, just as strong. Katsuki could feel the backdraft of wind with each punch the pro landed, but it wasn't enough. It wasn't *enough*.

"Bro you're uh- you're going a little feral-"

"Katsuki."

The hand in his squeezed, dragging him back into his body just enough to realize he was losing control. His lips were pulled back in a snarl, baring sharpened fangs and vicious growls. He could feel the back and forth twitching of his tail behind him, knew that his ears were visible also, pressed back against his head like a hissing cat, and his claws were no doubt digging into the back of Shouto's hand.

The boy didn't complain, but his blue and grey eyes were swimming with worry when Katsuki finally dragged his gaze away from the battle scene.

"You need to breathe," Shouto told him. "You're no use to any of us, no use to Izuku, if you can't control yourself."

And that was the thing though, because it wasn't just Izuku anymore.

He hadn't been wanting to admit it before, even as it snuck up on him and tried hitting him in the face, but it wasn't just Izuku. It was Shouto, and Kirishima, and Crazy eyes and Eyebags. It was Pinky and Soy Sauce and Pikachu. It was his *friends*, in danger. If he focused, he could *feel* them around the facility. Not well, not like he could feel Izuku in front of him, but they came to him in waves of familiar

scents, familiar feelings.

When the wind turned in his direction he could smell the acid beneath Mina's feet, he could taste the sour electricity in the air as Kaminari used his quirk. Even the scent of Hatsume's blood, just below Izuku's, was swarming through him like a suffocating fog he couldn't push past.

Because this was his *pack* that was in trouble and he wasn't doing anything to stop it. He wasn't doing anything to help, he was just standing there like a fucking *coward*.

"We get them *out*," Katsuki growled, turning to Shouto with heavy breaths. It was taking everything he had not to tear into himself and rush in to fight.

Shouto nodded. "I agree. Our priority needs to be rescue, getting the injured out. Kirishima, you get Aizawa," the half-and-half ordered, receiving a nod from the red-head. "Katsuki, you get Izuku and Hatsume. I'll try and freeze the big guy long enough for you two to get them out and give All Might a chance-"

"No *time*," the fox snapped through Katsuki's teeth, his red eyes finding the battlefield again. Purple black mist was swirling around the leader, pulling him away from Shinsou, and All Might was half in the ground, the chicken thing wrapped in his arms as their heads stuck out another portal a few feet away. "Go *now*."

Before the others could react, the fox was rushing in.

It barely took him a second to leap through the air, letting out a few well timed explosions to get him to a position where he could drop on the mist guy. His clawed fingers wrapped around something metal and cold in the center of the mist and Katsuki gave a feral grin as he dug his claws in easily.

A chill ran through the air as Shouto walked up behind him, his ice spreading around them and finding the creature's legs, freezing it's body without freezing All Might.

Katsuki wasn't there enough to know what the others were doing, all he knew was the shock of green hair in front of him and he launched himself at it, tearing at the metal beneath him as he went and feeling a bit of satisfaction in him when the guy gurgled and seized.

"Kaachan!"

"*Up*," the fox ordered, hands gripping at skinny shoulders, tugging and tugging until the boy was on his feet, swaying slightly. "*Out*," it said, grabbing Hatsume as well and tossing her over it's shoulder, the weight barely registering as it turned back to glance at the battlefield behind them. Kirishima had Aizawa tossed over his shoulders easily, already jogging back towards their direction, and Shouto had a hand wrapped around Shinsou's bicep, dragging him as he stepped backwards towards their little group.

The closer they all got, the tighter Katsuki's skin got. Their scents surrounded him, strengthened him and he wanted to throw them all in a single room and hide them away from the world where no one could hurt them again.

"Kaachan- Kaachan! Wait!"

He'd already started dragging the shorter boy away, the others in front of them and Katsuki taking up the rear. Protecting them. He kept one ear focused behind him where the handy bitch was screaming and scratching and bitching, Shinsou's hold over him broken. Where the mist guy was coughing and sputtering and gurgling on the ground at his feet.

Where All Might was fighting.

"Kaachan!"

"*Shut. Up.*" The fox snarled, turning sharply on its heal until its face was only a breath away from Izu's. "*Get out. Not safe.*"

But the boy was shaking his head, reaching up to grab at Katsuki's shirt desperately. "Kaachan, you have to help All Might!"

That brought him up short, skin loosening just enough for Katsuki to focus again, his face twisting in confusion.

All Might? It wasn't just that he knew Izuku hated All Might, it's that they all knew the pro could handle himself. Sure, this creature was holding it's ground pretty damn well, but *no one* had beaten All Might. The man was unstoppable. He was a legend. Izuku didn't have to like him to know that. Why the hell would he need Katsuki's help?

"Please," Izuku cried, tears welling in his eyes and the fox pushed at his skin again, always having hated Izuku's sadness. "Please, I can't tell you why but- but he needs help. Please, Kaachan, you have to help him! You have to trust me-"

"Katsuki, Izuku, we need to go," Shouto said from a distance.

But Katsuki couldn't deny Izuku anything. He never could. So he grunted, shifting Hatsume until he was able to drop her onto Izuku's shoulders instead. The smaller by took the weight with little struggle, eyes glistening.

And Katsuki didn't want to leave his pack. Every fiber of his being was screaming at him to just get them out. Get them to safety. But Izuku had asked him to help and Katsuki couldn't say no.

So he looked back at Shouto and pushed Izuku towards him. "Get him out."

And for the first time since he'd been at school, he let the fox out.

Something in Shinsou's chest settled when the air shifted and Katsuki went with it.

None of them- except probably Izuku -had seen Katsuki's second quirk, had seen his fox. Most of them hadn't even known about it.

Still, seeing it was something else.

The fox was massive, roughly the size of a bear, with fur like smoldering wildfire. Sharp burnt orange against a sea of black. He left the ground charred in his wake, explosions of black soot with each step towards the battle in front of them. Two massive tails swayed behind him, flames licking at the tips dangerously.

It explained the weird feeling Shinsou felt when he looked at the blonde in class. Explained why he felt the need to stay close to him, to help him. Why his gran had moved them to Mustafu in the first place before she'd died.

Because Shinsou had lied that day when he'd told Katsuki why he was staring at him. Had lied when he told him that his gran had been a priestess, that he thought his weird senses were just part of his quirk. Had lied and lied and lied because he *knew* that Katsuki had a spirit in him, knew there was something that pushed at his skin just like it pushed at Shinsou's. And now it all made sense.

Because Katsuki was a Kitsune. A *Kitsune*. And Shinsou knew now why

he was here.

He'd found another hybrid.

Chapter End Notes

Did someone ask for a cliffhanger? Because I have one, right here. *cackles*

As a side note, Izuku's glove that Hatsume made him looks like his newer gloves in the anime. (The ones she made him to help brace his arm so it doesn't break as often.) Just fyi.

Also like, this Shinsou thing was totally not in the plans, but like... I had a random bout of inspiration and got an idea and I'm running with it. I *may* do a spin off with Shinsou because I love him so much, but I haven't completely decided yet.

Chapter 9: Deserving

Chapter Summary

> Katsuki gets angry, Shouto has a gay panic, and Inko doesn't think she deserves this.

Chapter Notes

> Did someone ask for gay panic?
>
> Okay listen, at first I was not happy with this chapter but now that I'm done with it, I am in love with how it turned out. Hope everyone else likes it to!
>
> A warning for everyone reading. I do plan on there being smut in this story LATER in the chapters. However, I'm going to do a fade to black and write the smut into it's own little side story. That way you can feel free to skip it if you don't want to read it! None of that will happen until later though, so no need to fret. :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The world came back in snippits.

Bright flashes of lights and the sharp scent of cleaner. There was beeping in the background, too loud and rhythmic, a weight in his hand and a tightness around his chest. Voices would fade in and out and Katsuki couldn't seem to keep a grasp on the time or how long he was laying there before his mind finally came back to him and he slowly blinked his eyes open.

The sky outside was dark and the lights were dimmed in the room, but he could see enough to know it was a hospital room. A quick glance down showed a familiar head of green hair resting at his side. Izuku was sat in the most uncomfortable looking chair the blonde had ever seen, arched forward so his head was able to rest on where he and Katsuki's hands were joined together.

Dead asleep.

The curtain across from him was closed, but he could smell the stench of oil and mechanics, telling him Hatsume was there, the steady beat of her heart a welcome feeling.

Next to him was another bed, their curtains pulled back so Katsuki could see who it was, though he was hesitant to look. He could already feel the sick black fog wafting around the person, thicker than he'd felt on Shouto and Shinsou, older, darker... it was suffocating and tasted like death. Still he turned to see-

"All Might?"

The man was practically unrecognizable. He was gaunt and sickly, hunched over on himself like he could barely keep himself in a sitting position. His face looked stretched and his hair hung limp in a way Katsuki hadn't seen personally before. But the most surprising thing was the inky black smoke that looked like it was pouring out of the hero's side, seeping from it like a chimney and filling his area of the room.

He looked over at Katsuki with wide, pin blue eyes before blinking. "I-I'm sorry?"

Yeah fucking right, he snorted. "They fuck you up like this, or have you been like this?"

Fingers tightened around his own and Katsuki glanced down to see Izuku's eyes wide open, something akin to fear twisting in his features as he registered what Katsuki had said. Which was weird. Why would Izuku be scared-

"I'm afraid I've no idea what you're talking about, young man. My name is Yagi Toshinori," All Might laughed, reaching a skeleton hand up to rub at his hair. And even if Katsuki was stupid and believed him, the almost panicked look he sent Izuku a second later would have shown the student he was lying.

"Sure, and I'm the queen of England," he scoffed.

"Kaachan don't-"

But he shook his head, slowly pushing himself up into a seated position. "I can smell it on him, Izu. I'm not an idiot, I can tell it's All Might." He gestured wildly towards the wide eyed man and glared. "Besides, he's got All Might's hair from his early days, same eyes, and he's in the same hospital room as the students who got hurt at the USJ. I'm not an idiot. You want it a secret, that's fine, but don't lie to me."

"Kaachan-"

"No, it's fine, young Midoriya," All Might said with a resigned smile, his shoulders slumping heavy as he breathed. "There is no point lying to the boy when you already know. My name really is Yagi Toshinori, but yes, I am All Might. This did not happen because of this fight, so you have nothing to worry about, though I do ask that this remain a secret. Very few people know of my injuries outside of the two of you, so I simply ask-"

A chair screeched as Izuku shot to his feet, his head bowed so his bangs covered his face to anyone besides Katsuki, who was close enough to see the pain and tears welling up in his best friend's eyes. "Izu-"

"Katsuki stop," the boy begged, the use of his given name drawing the blonde up short. After a long silence, Izuku took a deep breath and patted Katsuki's hand, a forced smile slipping onto his face. "Sho and Shinsou went down to get some food. I'm- I'm going to go let them know you woke up and- and text the others to let them know too, okay?"

"Izu-"

"Okay," the greenette said with another pat before turning on his heal and rushing away.

He left the scent of sadness in his wake, mixing sickeningly with anxiety and pain. Katsuki didn't need to wonder *why* necessarily. But it still hurt him to see the boy running away from him.

They sat in silence for a while, the only sound between Katsuki and All Might being the steady beeping of the heart monitors. The fog was slowly drifting towards him though, thick and dark and dangerous, and Katsuki wanted nothing more than a distraction from whatever he'd sense.

"I feel as though I must apologize," All Might said quietly, but Katsuki refused to look at him. The man sighed, the bed creaking as he shifted, sending the fog wafting through the air like storm clouds on a breeze. "I did not tell you originally, but when I saved you both from that sludge monster, it was not the first time I'd met Young Midoriya. I had saved him just earlier that day and... I believe I hurt him more than I thought I did." Katsuki's fists clenched as he listened, hearing the sadness in the man's words, wrinkling his nose at the stench of it. "I thought at the time that I was doing the right thing but-"

"He loved you, you know," the student interrupted, just loud enough

for the teacher to hear him. He could hear the man turn towards him, but Katsuki didn't take his gaze away from the window. "I don't know what happened that day, he still won't tell me, but whatever it was crushed him. Whatever you did tore every last hope he had in him out and replaced it with hurt and fury. Yet still... still he told me to turn around and help you. He begged me because he knew something I didn't and even after whatever the hell you did, he still wanted to save you."

"Young Midoriya-"

"No," the fox growled, the sound ripped out of his throat before he could stop it and the boy turned his burning red-gold eyes to the older hero. "You shut the hell up and listen to me. Izuku is going to be the best damn support hero, hell, maybe even the best hero, in the goddamn world okay? He will. Because he's- he's fucking *good*," Katsuki pressed, fingers clutching in his blankets and glaring, rage and emotion churning in his stomach like a deadly potion. "He's so good that it makes me sick. And you need to know that when he gets there... when he's standing at the top of the world and you're dying in a hospital bed someday, that it wasn't because of you." Dark eyes glared as he let the words sink in, watching them etch their way into sickly skin and brand themselves across protruding cheekbones. "Izuku didn't get there out of spite. He didn't get there because whatever you said pushed him to be better than what you saw in him. He's going to get there because he works hard and because he's smart. He's going to get there because he deserves it. You didn't do shit. Got it?"

The hero didn't get the chance to reply before the doors were bursting back open, a gaggle of colours all but pouring into the room: green, red, pink, purple, gold. Izuku was red faced and out of breath, but there was a smile back on his lips as he explained that the others were already there to visit when he'd found Shouto and Shinsou in the cafe, the latter of which had snuck Katsuki a bowl of spicey udon before silently closing the curtain between the group and All Might. Katsuki didn't question it, though he did raise an eyebrow at the boy who dutifully ignored him.

The room quickly delved into chaos, and eventually Hatsume awoke and joined their little huddle around Katsuki's bed. Normally the blonde pretended to hate the rowdiness of his group of friends, but something about the excitement and the warmth radiating off of them settled light and welcoming in his chest. He couldn't help but hide his smile behind his food as they chattered on about the battle, how they were glad everyone was okay and how cool it was to fight actual

villains. The blonde was informed that Mr. Aizawa was badly injured, but overall will make a full recovery, and that no one else had been too badly hurt during the fight, of which he found himself relieved, though he didn't say so.

"Okay listen-" Kaminari interrupted loudly, cutting off a very loud discussion over whether Kirishima could tear out of Sero's tape or not if given the chance. "I think we've given Kaachan enough time to settle-"

"Don't call me that Dunce Face-"

"So I think we should definitely totally absolutely address the fact that he has *two quirks* and he *didn't tell any of us*," the electric blonde continued as if Katsuki hadn't interrupted.

Izuku sat up straight, a sudden worry flickering over his face as he shared a glance with the fox. "Um... Kami maybe-"

But it was too late, the others were already hooked to the topic, practically shouting questions at him. *Is it true you can turn into a fox? I heard a villain say you were the size of a bus! Why didn't you tell us? Can you do anything else? Do you go into heat like cats?*

"What the fuck? No!" Katsuki growled, throwing his empty bowl at Kaminari's head, his face beat red at the accusation. "If you'll all shut up for two fucking seconds, I'll tell you." It took a few more moments for them all to quiet. Izuku, Shouto, and Hatsume were cuddled up on the end of his bed, the others having pulled chairs up around it and leaning in eagerly. With a grunt, he took a deep breath and rolled his eyes. "Yes, I've got a second quirk, fucking obviously. Yes, I'll show it to you later if you promise to leave me the fuck alone about it. I'm not the size of a bus, it's more like the size of a bear. I don't use it much so I didn't bother telling anyone. Yes I can do other shit." He got the answers out as quickly as he could, crossing his arms from where he sat up in bed and glared out the window.

"Oh. my. god," Mina squealed, leaning forward on her chair to grab at Katsuki's leg and shake it. Her grin was wide enough to split her face when he finally looked at her and she practically screamed. "Does that mean we're your *pack?*"

He already regretted telling them.

"Oi, IcyHot."

Shouto lingered behind as their group of friends- now dubbed 'The Pack' by Mina and Kaminari- left for the night. After their long conversation about Katsuki's quirk and roughly how it worked, they'd all been kicked out once Mrs. Midoriya showed up to take the other two home, leaving only Shouto, Midoriya, and Katsuki left in the hall as the older woman had left to pull the car around.

"You're coming to our place tonight," the blonde said, leaving no room for argument, not that he wanted to. After everything they'd been through the past day, after seeing Katsuki and Izuku bandaged and injured in the hospital, he felt like he needed some time with his two best friends. Some time to just sit and be with them. To know that they were okay. So he nodded and texted his sister that he wouldn't be home that night, as well as sending her Mrs. Midoriya's contact information in case she needed it. He could deal with his father's anger another day.

Before he knew it, he was being bustled into a house he'd only been to once, breathing in the wonderful scent of *home* that he was so unfamiliar with.

Mrs. Midoriya was all too happy to have him over again, flustered and smiling as she waved away any politeness he showed her. She reminded him of Fuyumi in a way, all gentle smiles and soft laughs.

He enjoyed it.

What he enjoyed more however, was the way Katsuki shifted the moment the three boys entered the living room to wait for dinner. It was a seamless transition, one that Shouto would have missed if he'd even so much as blinked. One second there was a tired blonde, the next there was a massive fox.

And Shouto had seen the fox before, during the USJ fight when Katsuki had turned around and rushed right back into battle. But seeing it so close was mesmerizing. He was beautiful- his fur the colour of the night sky, the red-orange spots curling around his body like flames and embers. There were no scorch marks where he walked this time, not like there was in battle, and the flames were missing as well, but still he looked incredibly powerful. Dangerous even. Despite the fact that he was in fact roughly the size of a bear, though thinner, Katsuki moved around the living room with a certain grace. Like he knew exactly where everything was so he wouldn't knock anything over.

With a huff, the fox slunk it's way around the coffee table where there was a large open space with a soft looking rug and some pillows. Katsuki shuffled into the space without preamble and dropped himself into it, sprawling out like a cat before settling into something that looked much too comfortable to be fair.

He hadn't realized he'd been staring until Izuku giggled beside him, nudging the dual-haired boy with an elbow. "I'd say you'll get used to it, but you probably won't. I grew up with him and it's still incredible to see." Shouto nodded and blushed when the boy nudged him again. "Go ahead, we usually cuddle up and watch movies after school. Kaachan likes to dog pile."

Shouto had no idea what that meant. Lucky for him, Izuku seemed to take pity on him and strode easily across the room before plopping himself down on the floor in front of Katsuki, just inside the curve of his body. He picked up a remote and turned the tv on, smiling up at Shouto and patting the floor beside him, the side closest to Katsuki's tails. With supposed permission, Shouto made his way forward, settling a bit awkwardly next to Izuku and trying not to jump with a tail settled in his lap.

Katsuki was staring at him when he glanced up in surprise, his head resting on the floor next to Izuku's legs. He blinked lazily at him, his second tail brushing against Shouto's back almost in challenge. Hesitantly, Shouto lowered his hands until they rested in the fur of Katsuki's large tail. It was softer than he was expecting, though still coarse enough to have a bit of texture under Shouto's calloused fingers. It twitched under the attention, but when he looked back, Katsuki's eyes had drifted closed in content and Shouto couldn't help but relax, leaning back into the warm body of the fox.

It felt like he was being let in on some massive secret. Like there was some sort of honor in being able to see the fox like this, in being able to touch him like this. He didn't quite understand it, but something settled inside him as Katsuki curled around the two boys. The scent of wildfire rested in the air and Shouto allowed it to pull him in, to wrap him up in something that felt entirely too similar to love.

Love?

A jolt of panic ricocheted off his ribs and his eyes flew open- *when had he even closed them?*

Was this love?

Shouto had never entertained the idea of romance or relationships. He couldn't afford to get attached to people, couldn't let them get in his way or distract him. And he'd never been close enough to anyone to feel any sort of attraction towards them. He wasn't blind, obviously he knew Katsuki and Izuku were good looking, but looks had never been a factor for him. *Nothing* had been a factor for him until a month ago when the other two boys had all but shoved their way into his life. And the strangest thing was, he let them. He let them because he found himself enjoying their company. They were such polar opposites, and yet so alike that Shouto couldn't help but like them both.

And he did… like them, that is.

He liked the way Katsuki was blunt to a fault, because sometimes Shouto didn't pick up on social clues like others might have. He liked how Izuku babbled and ranted and muttered with no end in sight, his excitement almost palpable whenever he got on a topic he enjoyed. He liked the way they both respected his secrets, respected that sometimes he didn't want to be touched or didn't want to speak. And sometimes Katsuki got protective if others got too close or too annoying, which was cute. And Izuku would turn red and flustered when Shouto said certain things, which was also cute. They were both… cute.

Is this love?

Did he love them?

Shouto didn't know what love felt like. He knew he loved his sister, and his brother. He knew he'd loved his mom and Touya a long time ago. But family love was different wasn't it? People didn't want to cuddle with their family like this. They didn't want to hug them and hold hands and make them smile and… and kiss them. Did they?

Did *he?*

He tried to imagine himself kissing Izuku or Katsuki and it only made his heart race more, the offending organ hammering dangerously against his sternum. Hard enough that Shouto briefly wondered if he was having a heart attack.

Something shifted behind him and Shouto dug his fingers into his pants, trying to calm his breathing before someone noticed his panic.

He wasn't opposed to the idea of kissing. He didn't know how to do it,

but the idea sounded nice. He couldn't help but wonder if Katsuki tasted like wildfires too, or if Izuku tasted like lightning. He couldn't help but imagine what it'd be like, to taste both of them, to hold their hands and know that they were his. That they loved him.

Holy crap, I am in love.

A sharp tug of his hair finally drew Shouto out of his spiral and he blinked to clear his head. Katsuki was sat in front of him, blonde hair messy and red eyes glaring at him with something like worry and frustration. Izuku was next to him, his hands hovering over Shouto like he wanted to touch him and comfort him but wasn't sure what to do.

And had Izuku always had those little freckles decorating his face? He wondered how many of them there were, how long it'd take for him to sit there and count every single one. Were they just on his face? Or did he have them on his shoulders too? His arms? His back?

Another sharp tug and Katsuki let out a warning growl. "Oi, IcyHot. I can fucking smell your panic. What the hell is going on in that head of yours?"

Shouto wasn't sure. He didn't know how he could tell the two of them that *they* were what he was panicking about. The both of them. That he didn't know how to handle a first crush, much less two of them. And was he even allowed to like two people at once? Was that a thing? Would they look at him weird if they knew? Would they be jealous? Could Shouto choose between the two of them if he had to?

He opened his mouth to tell them that it was nothing, that he was fine and was just nervous. He had an excuse on the tip of his tongue, ready to tell them he wasn't used to cuddling or something else that would no doubt make them question his childhood. Instead what came out was-

"I want to kiss you."

The silence that settled around them was deafening. Katsuki's face was a bright red, nearly as bright as his eyes, and Izuku looked almost pained beside him, which Shouto hated so he also said- "both of you," before his brain could catch up to his stupid mouth. Izuku was red a moment later, mouth hanging open in surprise, and Shouto wasn't sure what to do from this point.

Did he kiss them? Did he wait for them to kiss him? Did he need

permission first?

And maybe they didn't even like him like that. Maybe he was the only one out of the three of them with these weird feelings in his chest. He wasn't sure if he was okay with that… if he could handle knowing that he was in love and neither of them loved him back. Would it ruin whatever friendship they had? Would he be kicked out of the so-called Pack? Could he-

Hands gripped the sides of his face so quickly, Shouto didn't have time to react before Katsuki lurched forward.

The kiss was a violent one– not that he'd expect anything less from the fox –and Shouto wasn't sure if it was supposed to be a lot teeth and tongue and *hunger*, but he couldn't find it in him to care. He tried his best to keep up, but it was like Katsuki was consuming him, sucking the air out of his lungs with every hot press of his soft lips and sharp teeth.

Shouto pulled back to suck in a breath and wondered if his own face was as red as Katsuki's.

They stared at each other for entirely too long in the silence, Shouto not knowing what to say as he struggled to catch his breath. Katsuki was the first to move, pulling back just enough to turn towards Izuku with a wild sort of look on his face. "Izu?"

"I-I…" The greenette stuttered, swallowing hard as he turned his gaze back and forth between Katsuki and Shouto. "I like you both too but-"

His words were cut off as Katsuki shot forward again.

And wow… is that what it'd looked like when he kissed Shouto? Because he could get used to seeing that. Seeing the way Izuku all but melts in the blonde's grasp, how his head tilts just right for the other boy to devour him. And he'd been right, it was a lot of teeth. By the time he pulled away from Izuku, the boy's lips were red and there were little teeth indents in his plush bottom lip that made Shouto want to sink his own teeth into them.

Could he sink his own teeth into them? Was that allowed now?

"Izuku," he whispered, still a bit out of breath from his own kiss. "May I kiss you too?"

Distantly he heard Katsuki snort, muttering something about being 'so

damn polite all the time,' but Shouto ignored him. His eyes didn't leave Izuku's until the boy gave a hesitant, shy nod.

And Shouto didn't quite know what he was doing when he leaned forward and pressed his still bruised lips against Izuku's. He was much gentler than Katsuki, that was for sure, but Izuku still gave in like he would give Shouto anything he asked for. It was slow and soft in a way that Katsuki's kiss wasn't, but it was just as good and it still left them both panting as they pulled away from each other.

"Was that okay?" he asked, and Izuku blushed even brighter before nodding.

Silence settled over them again when Shouto pulled back to his spot, none of the boys quite sure where to go from here.

"We should- we should probably talk about this," Izuku said hesitantly, hands clenched together in his lap.

Katsuki snorted and rolled his eyes. "What's there to talk about? We kissed, you're both mine now. I don't do refunds," he said, but Shouto could see the uncertainty in the boy's face as he crossed his arms protectively over his chest.

Shouto shifted slightly and frowned. "Can three boys be… in a relationship together though?" He wondered aloud, biting at his lip. (And *huh*, they did taste like wildfire and lightning.) "I only ever see two people together. Wouldn't it be weird? Is it even allowed?"

He felt it was a valid question, and by the way Izuku and Katsuki's faces scrunched up in consideration, he knew they'd been thinking it too. Still, how were they supposed to find out if-

"Kaachan? Where are you going?"

Shouto's head snapped up as he watched Katsuki stand, making his way towards the kitchen where Mrs. Midoriya was cooking dinner. When he didn't answer, Shouto and Izuku shared a look before scrambling to their feet and following, arriving just in time to hear the boy voice his question to the older woman.

"Mom, are three boys allowed to kiss and stuff, or only two?"

Shouto found himself mourning the loss of the bowl of ramen now shattered on the floor. His stomach cursed him for doing this before dinner had been served.

Midoriya Inko was a gentle woman. Kind, loving, understanding.

She tried her best to be a good person and raise her boys to be even better.

Still, she worried about them. They were strong and smart respectively, but they were going into a career that was going to be dangerous and nerve wrecking. She knew one day that she'd get that phone call saying one of her boys was injured or kidnapped or… or worse. She just hadn't expected it to be so soon, before they'd even finished school. She figured she'd have enough time in the next couple of years to get ready for that eventuality, to get ready for the way her heart stuck in her throat when she saw their faces on the news or heard the beeping of the hospital monitors.

Seeing Katsuki wrapped up in gauze and Izuku huddled up beside him with his own bandages on his face and head, his arm bandaged from minor fractures, had burst a dam in her she didn't even know she'd been holding.

That being said, the boys were relatively okay. Katsuki had a few bruised ribs and minor abrasions that the school's nurse had been able to mostly mend, and Izuku had gotten out with just a mild concussion.

Still, she couldn't help the worry that gurgled in the back of her throat like acid. She didn't know how she was going to be able to do it when they graduated, when she was seeing them on the news every single day, their lives on the line and danger an everyday occurrence.

So she did what she did best. She avoided.

She'd had her cry at the hospital, and now it was time for mothering.

Little Shouto had come along with the boys to spend the night, no doubt they wanted to spend time together after such a traumatic day. She wasn't surprised to see Katsuki transform almost immediately after stepping through the door, though she hadn't been aware that Shouto knew of the blonde's other 'quirk'. She wondered how recent that was.

What they needed was a good cuddle and some warm comfort food. Something quick to make but satisfying to the tummy.

Ramen was easy enough and didn't require too many ingredients, and she knew all three boys liked it well enough. It would have to do for

now, but maybe she'd make something bigger for lunch. Something special for the boys after all they'd gone through.

She heard Katsuki before he spoke, having long ago memorized the stomp of his bare feet across the wood floors. The other two boys scrambled after him, rushing instead of walking. Which was strange. Izuku knew better than to run in the house.

Perhaps they smelt the food and knew it was ready. Maybe the hospital hadn't fed-

"Mom, are three boys allowed to kiss and stuff, or only two?"

Midoriya Inko was a gentle woman. Kind, loving, understanding.

She didn't think she deserved this.

Chapter End Notes

Once again, thank you all for the amazing comments! We're going to start delving a bit more into Katsuki's kitsune side now that the others know a bit more. Which also means we'll start getting into his plot as well.

Look forward to some more Auntie Hinko next chapter.

Chapter 10: Something New

Chapter Summary

> Inko doesn't get paid enough for this. Katsuki is *hungry*. And Hinko finally gets to meet the boyfriend.

Chapter Notes

> OH MY GOSH ya'll. All these comments are just the sweetest and I love every one of you! Thank you so much for all your kind words! I'm glad everyone is enjoying this story as much as I'm enjoying writing it!
>
> TRIGGER WARNING: It's not really discussed in this chapter, but I'm going to put this here anyway just in case. We get a tiny bit of a hint towards Shouto's abuse at the end of this chapter, and we'll get it a lot in the next chapter, so be aware my babies! Take care of yourselves!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Okay,” Inko breathed, flexing her fingers where they still hung in the air. Katsuki was looking at her like she was crazy, the other two boys behind him clearly embarrassed. She couldn’t blame them. If the look of their mouths was any indication, they were looking for validation and Katsuki was nothing if not to the point on certain things.

How had she gotten here?

Logically she knew this day would come eventually. She lived in a house full of teenage boys. She knew this talk was coming, it was just that neither one of them had ever shown signs of… well liking anyone. They’d never brought home any girls, or boys for that matter, they’d never talked about anyone. They’d only ever been focused on each other and hero work.

She’d honestly thought maybe they weren’t interested in that kind of thing at all.

“Okay,” she said again, holding her hands up as if to hold the boys off. “Wow, okay. This is happening. Can we- give mom a second to clean this up and then I’ll answer all of your questions okay?” She asked, suddenly feeling way out of her depth. Not for the first time, she wished Mitsuki was here. Her friend would have had this over and

done within seconds. “Why don’t you boys go sit on the couch and wait for me. I’ll be in there in two seconds, okay?”

Katsuki looked like he wanted to argue, but Izuku grabbed his hand and pulled him away before he got the chance, ducking his head slightly to mutter something angrily at the blonde. Shouto, bless his heart, glanced back at Inko like he was afraid of what she was going to talk to them about, but when she gave him a gentle smile, he only nodded and left.

“Okay,” she said for the tenth time, using the word to ground herself and steady her hands as she focused.

Step one: clean up the mess.

Step two: have *the talk* with three teenage boys, one of which was her own son, one who wasn’t even fully human, and one who was the son of the number two hero and undoubtedly *not her kid*.

She could do this. She could do this.

With a deep breath, Inko stepped into the living room, a tray of bowls in her hands that she carefully placed on the table before taking a seat across from the three boys. Shouto was sat in the middle, looking extremely stiff and uncomfortable. Katsuki was to his left, slumped halfway into the couch with his arms crossed and eyes glaring off into the distance. And Izuku, sweet little Izuku, looked like he was about to cry as he glanced between his two friends and Inko.

She waited until she passed them each a bowl of ramen before settling back in her own chair. “I will be honest, boys, I didn’t expect… *this*.” She laughed a bit awkwardly before straightening up and nodding to them. “But I’ll answer your questions as best I can! Okay? To answer your first one, yes, you can be in a relationship with multiple people.”

The change was instant, like a weight was lifted off all three of their shoulders and the boys let out a breath she hadn’t been aware they’d been holding. She smiled at them, hoping to put them at ease despite her own nerves about the situation.

“The word for it is polyamory. It’s when more than two people willingly get into a romantic relationship with each other,” she tried to explain.

“Isn’t that cheating, though?” Izuku asked quietly

Inko shook her head. “As long as everyone in the relationship is aware of what’s going on, and they are all okay with it, then it’s not cheating. I know it’s a little weird, but plenty of people have very loving and long lasting relationships with more than one partner. That being said, you boys do need to think this through,” she said seriously. They tensed again and she raised her hands to calm them. “This relationship isn’t bad, and I won’t allow anyone to tell you differently, but you need to be aware that it isn’t going to be easy.” Three faces screwed up in confusion and she sighed. “We’ve gotten to a point in time where who you love isn’t as big of a deal. Which is good, but you boys are going to be heroes one day. You’ll be in the public eye. With that comes a lot of rumors, a lot of judgements.”

Katsuki sneered and sat up quickly, fists clenched in his lap. “Why the fuck’s that matter? Let the idiots judge, I don’t care.”

“That’s good,” Inko nodded, smiling sweetly. She knew Katsuki wasn’t one to just roll over and let people walk all over him, however sometimes he needed validation before he was willing to believe it himself. She admired his strong attitude, especially when it’d help them in the long run on this matter. “Don’t let them get to you. What you’re doing, or want to do, is not wrong, but a lot of people might think it is. You need to be prepared for that inevitability. Katsuki, you and Izuku too might have your own issues to deal with when it comes to the public as well.”

Katsuki frowned, looking like he was ready to argue, but Izuku spoke before he could. “Because Kaachan’s adopted?”

Inko nodded. “You boys aren’t related, and *I* know you’ve never thought of each other like brothers, but the public won’t know that. You need to be ready for people to question you about it.”

“What if we just don’t tell anyone?” Shouto asked quietly, drawing all eyes to him.

He looked perhaps the most spooked out of all of them, and Inko couldn’t help but wonder if he was thinking of his father. No doubt the number two hero would have something to say about his son’s relationship. She could only hope it was words of comfort and acceptance. (*She didn’t think it would be*.)

“You can do that too,” Inko smiled. “Plenty of pro heroes hide relationships, I’m sure. Most of them are single as far as the public is concerned, but I find that very hard to believe myself. Your personal

lives and how it relates to your hero lives might be something you should discuss with one of your teachers, they may be able to tell you more than I could," she said with a soft laugh. "But keeping it a secret is an option. No matter what you boys choose however, know that I'll support you," her eyes met Shouto's and she smiled at him, "every one of you."

And that, she supposed was that.

The boys didn't have many other questions, and she could tell whatever this was that they had was only just starting. It was fresh, and they probably didn't even know what they wanted out of each other yet. So she left the three of them in the living room to talk it out, spending the rest of her night in her bedroom, hoping it would work out for the three of them.

As it did most nights where Inko found herself overwhelmed by her boys, the drawer at the bottom of her desk drew her attention and she sighed, staring at it. She hadn't opened it since she'd first moved in. Promised herself that she wouldn't until Katsuki asked her to. But it was days like this where she wanted nothing more than to call up her best friend and laugh about how she'd finally gotten to the teenage boys part of parenthood.

With a sigh, she dug into the top drawer of her dresser and pulled out a bottle of vodka she'd hidden away months ago when the boys had been attacked by that villain just before summer started. She slipped over to the windowsill and took a seat before pouring two shots, sliding one up to the open window where the moonlight glistened across it\s surface. She raised the other with a sigh.

"Mitsuki, our sons are going to be the death of me one of these days," she joked, a small smile spread across her lips. She downed the shot with a small wince before pouring herself another one. "If you ever come back, I'm demanding recompense," another shot, "because this is not fair that *I* have to deal with the hormones all by myself. I didn't even date until college. You're the one who's like, five thousand years old or something and have probably dated a million guys."

A few shots later and the one on the windowsill was still left untouched. Inko rested her head against the cool glass, her head swimming but her heart light as she smiled up at the moon.

"I don't know if you can hear me, Mitsu… but your son is wonderful. He really is. He'll kill me one day," she laughed, shaking her head.

“But I’ll die a happy woman. I wouldn’t change him for the world.”

“So we have shit to talk about then,” Katsuki grumbled after they’d all finished their food and Momma Inko had disappeared into her room. They’d spread out amongst the living room, Katsuki sprawled across the floor in his usual spot, with Izuku and Shouto huddled on opposite sides of the couch. It wasn’t awkward, just comfortable. “First things first, do you two want to be my boyfriends.”

“Kaachan,” Izuku whined, digging his face into the pillow on his lap. His voice sounded embarrassed, but there was a sharp scent of cotton candy and cherries wafting from him, something similar coming from Shouto as well. “You can’t just- we should- this is all just a lot.”

The blonde rolled his eyes and leaned forward, elbows on his knees as he glared at the two of them. “Well? We all like each other right?” Shouto hesitated before nodding, and Izuku’s head bobbed slightly before viridian eyes popped over the pillow to watch. “Then what’s the fuckin’ problem? You’re both part of the pack already, it’s not like I’m letting you go now. But if you don’t want this, then fuckin’ tell me, because I do.”

The room was silent for a while before Shouto shifted on the couch, the soft scent of muddy uncertainty wafting through the air. “I want this,” he said quietly, chewing softly on his lip as he watched Katsuki and Izuku. “But- well my father- I would prefer if we could keep it a secret. At least while we’re in school if we can. My father would not be happy about it and if the press found out that his son- well… I just think we shouldn’t tell everyone. Maybe- maybe the pack eventually, when this isn’t so new. But for now-” The dual-haired boy shrugged and glanced down at his fingers, unsure.

Something inside of Katsuki growled at the idea of keeping it a secret. Something possessive and animalistic, something that wanted to mark both of the boys and show the entire world that they were his and no one else was even allowed to *look* at them. But he knew Shouto had a point. Not only was it better to keep it a secret, but it was also dangerous to let it out when they became heroes. No doubt other pros kept their relationships a secret so the villains didn’t go after their partners. Katsuki *knew* that, but the fox inside him didn’t like it.

“Fine,” the blonde shrugged. “I’m fine with that. Nobody needs to be up in my business anyway.”

Izuku was fidgety, shifting back and forth on the couch like he was

wanting to say something but didn't know how to say it. Katsuki glared, knowing the boy would break eventually. He didn't have to wait long.

"What about- um… well your-" Izuku waved to his hair like it told the blonde anything, which it *didn't*. "Your fox stuff? I- well…"

And Katsuki knew what he meant. Izuku hated keeping secrets in the first place, now he was meant to keep that big of a secret from a boyfriend? Still, they hadn't told anyone outside of Auntie Hinko. The old woman had told them to keep Shouto close, to make a pack so he'd be stronger. No doubt she expected him to tell them his secret. Right? And yet they'd *never* told anyone before. He wasn't even sure Shouto would believe him.

"Fox stuff?"

Katsuki frowned, tapping his knuckles on his knee as he thought. "There's stuff about my fox… quirk… that you don't know," he said carefully, "I figured we'd tell you eventually because some of it has to do with you. Just didn't figure it'd be this soon," he grumbled, glaring at the empty spot on the couch between the other two boys. After a second of thought, he nodded. "We'll take you to meet Auntie Hinko next week. She'll know what to do."

"What about other stuff?" Izuku quickly changed the subject, hesitance and excitement hidden under his tone. "Like- well I mean… I liked kissing you two. Can we… do that again?"

Katsuki snorted, dropping backwards until he was sprawled across the ground. "Yeah, like you're gonna be able to stop me," he smirked, reveling in the blush that decorated the greenette's face.

Which wasn't true, obviously. But Katsuki knew that he'd have a hard time stopping now that he'd gotten a taste for them.

He could still taste the frost and heat on his tongue from Shouto, like Ice Cream or Mochi on a hot summers day. And Izuku tasted like a thunderstorm on the horizon. It was an intoxicating mixture, one he was sure he'd get addicted to if he wasn't too careful. Just having their scents mixing in the house made the fox lazy and content inside him.

"I would like to kiss more as well," Shouto said, a soft smile on his lips as he looked down at Katsuki and then over towards Izuku. "I enjoyed it. But again, perhaps not in front of others."

“Good,” Katsuki growled, “I don’t want anyone else seeing you like that.”

After that it was always the three of them.

Not much changed between the boys that others would notice, but Shouto found ways to spend more time at the Midoriya House when he could and Izuku would sit with them more often during lunch instead of holing away in the labs for eternity. Sometimes Katsuki liked to toe the line of their rules, lingering in the locker rooms to steal heated kisses, sneaking into the labs to press Izuku against a table with hungry teeth, shoving one of them up against a tree after school until neither of them could breathe when they got onto the bus to ride home. Not that any of them were complaining.

Still, the amount of times they’d almost been caught by Hatsume or Aizawa in that week alone had Katsuki scolded every time.

He never listened.

They held hands on the bus sometimes, when it was mostly empty or they were all smooshed into one of the back seats together. And most days after school found Katsuki transformed in the living room with Izuku all but laying on top of him and Shouto cuddled up in the curve of his fox form like a kitten as they took much needed naps.

The only issue was Shouto’s scar. Not that Katsuki minded it, it was actually kind of sexy in a way. The problem was being so close to it when they were kissing. The problem was almost touching it.

Katsuki was very hands on. He grabbed and he pulled and he *consumed*. His hands framed faces, slid through hair and *tugged*. He wanted to be closer to them both, but getting too close meant he could taste the black ink around Shouto’s eye. Getting too close meant he could hear the screams and taste the pain in the back of his throat. It wasn’t as bad if he didn’t look at it, but it meant he couldn’t kiss Shouto for too long before the overwhelming sensations made him want to gag.

He hadn’t touched it yet- the scar. He was always very careful of avoiding the discoloured skin when he grabbed at Shouto’s face. Not because of the scar itself- part of him wondered what it’d feel like under his fingers, under his *tongue*- it was because he didn’t want to know what might happen if he touched the fog that surrounded it.

“We should really tell Auntie Hinko,” Izuku whispered late the next

Friday night when they were all curled up on the futons they'd laid on the floor, Katsuki sprawled out in the middle with Shouto curled up on one side of his chest and Izuku on the other. The blonde had been running his hand through red locks, brushing them away from the scar carefully, eyes trained on the fog. He hadn't really realized he'd been staring until Izuku spoke and he tore his gaze away. "Huh?"

"About the fog," Izuku clarified, his own eyes trained on Shouto's scar as if he could see the offending blackness. "Especially now. Shouto might not see it, but I know it's been bothering you, being so close to it. He needs to know why or he's going to think it's because of the scar itself, and Auntie Hinko can help us figure out what the smoke is, right?"

He hoped so. "It's gonna freak him out," the Kitsune said instead, frowning down at their partner. "He's never told us what it's from. What if he isn't comfortable with us knowing, much less the old hag?"

It's one of the reasons Katsuki hadn't brought it up yet, why he hadn't brought up Shinsou's or All Might's either. Because he had an idea of what it was and he didn't know how to handle that kind of knowledge.

"Kaachan?"

"I think I know what the fog is… but if I'm right, then she's going to want to test it and I don't know if Shouto will be okay with that," he said quietly, voice just barely a whisper in Izuku's hair as Katsuki turned to face him. "We don't even know if he's going to be okay with what I am, much less with her demanding to know about his childhood trauma."

Izuku hummed, arms tightening around Katsuki's waist and face digging into his shoulder. "He has to know if this is going to work, Kaachan. We can't keep secrets from him. Not ones as big as this."

Katsuki bit at his lips and tapped a finger on the back of Izuku's head. "Him knowing puts him in danger. You know what Mitsuki said, what Hinko said."

"Auntie Hinko also said you're stronger with a pack around you," Izuku mumbled sleepily. "Besides, we're all training to be heroes. Danger is going to be a regular occurrence. Better to know the enemy coming than to be ignorant of it."

Todoroki Shouto was exactly what Hinko expected when he trailed into her back room behind her trouble children. It had admittedly taken the boys much longer than she'd have liked to bring him to her, but nonetheless, he was there.

"Ah finally, the young Todoroki," she smiled, raising her hands towards the three boys and waving them closer. "I've heard so much about you. Please come here, let me see you." Katsuki scoffed as he took his normal seat across from her, Izuku beside him, but he didn't say anything as Shouto stepped up beside Hinko and came to rest on his knees. He bowed his head politely before introducing himself and Hinko grinned. "And he's polite. How our little kit here managed to snag two adorable catches like you, I'll never know."

"Oi, I'm a fucking catch myself, you old hag," Katsuki argued, but Hinko ignored him.

Instead, she raised her hands towards the Todoroki boy and brushed across his face lightly, averting her eyes and focusing on her fingertips. The boy stiffened under her, but otherwise said nothing as she explored his features.

She could hear a low growl in Katsuki's chest as she raised up towards the boy's eyes, no doubt where she knew his scar would be and she only clicked her tongue at him. "I'm only trying to get a better look at him, Katsuki. Do not growl at me."

"You don't have to touch him to know what he looks like," the boy retorted.

Hinko could feel the frown tugging on Shouto's face, but still he didn't pull away when her fingers brushed over rough skin. "Katsuki, that is rude. She's blind."

Hinko laughed at the bluntness of the boy, but Katsuki threw his arms up and snarled. "She's not *blind* blind though! Her eyes don't work but her quirk is like, awareness or some shit. She knows exactly what you look like, she's just being fucking weird and nosy," he argued.

Still, she didn't let it bother her as she explored. The scar was admittedly larger than she expected, but not ghastly or ugly. It was slightly warmer than the rest of his face, and she noticed his body temperature was different on either side. "Ah, yes, you have two quirks don't you? I believe Katsuki mentioned that. One hot and one cold. Though it doesn't feel like you use your fire very often," she mumbled, feeling the creases in his skin, the smoothness of his cheeks.

The boy's head tilted slightly and he hummed low in his throat. "How could you tell?"

"Oh, the little kit was right. I do just *know things* sometimes," she laughed, finally releasing the boy and letting him settle back at Katsuki's side. "Now, I assume you've come here to talk about the fog. I'd scold you for taking so long to bring him to me, but even I watch the news. I know you boys have had a rough couple of weeks, so I'll forgive you this time," she said generously.

"How fucking kind of you," Katsuki grumbled under his breath.

Todoroki however frowned and glanced between them. "The fog? I don't understand."

Now that surprised her. With how close the boys were sitting and how she could practically feel their need to be near each other, she'd have thought Katsuki had already spilled the beans. "Katsuki didn't tell you? Did he tell you about his fox then or is that a secret too? I'd have thought the fact that you were snogging his face off only a couple hours ago would have meant you'd have told him everything."

Her tone must have sounded accusatory, and the kissing was only a guess, but she must have been right because Katsuki was slamming his hands on the table and leaning forward in an instant, his tails thrashing in the air behind him and his ears twitching on top of his head. "The hell was I supposed to tell him, hah? 'Hey, I know you only *just* now learned that I have a second quirk, but spoiler alert, it isn't a second quirk *and* my extra powers make me see some creepy fog around your super traumatic scar that you never talk about?' HA!"

The silence that settled in the room was heavy and uncomfortable as Katsuki seemed to realize exactly what he'd said. Much to their surprise however, Shouto didn't seem angry. If anything he seemed curious, his hand raising to brush against his scar as if he could feel the fog that they were talking about. "There was a lot to unpack in that sentence," he said wisely, drawing a giggle from Izuku and a grin from Hinko. Katsuki grunted, but Shouto continued. "Perhaps we start from the beginning? What did you mean there isn't a second quirk?"

"The fox," Katsuki growled, dropping back onto his butt and crossing his arms, glaring off towards the wall as if the topic would just disappear if he wasn't looking at anyone. "It's not a quirk, it's a curse."

"It's a birthright," Hinko corrected sharply, glaring at the boy. "Tell

me boy, what do you know about the Yokai?"

The Todoroki boy was relatively silent throughout her explanation, though it was clear he was paying very close attention and took her extremely seriously. Katsuki himself seemed surprised that the boy wasn't blowing them off right away. Still, the boy was attentive and polite as she explained what she could, telling him briefly of Katsuki's mother, her position in her clan, what it meant for Katsuki to be a hybrid, how dangerous it was. He did spare a glance at the two tails behind the boy when she began to explain Katsuki's abilities and the fact that they were now certain he could be gaining more, though what they'd be was still unclear.

By the end of her lecture, Todoroki was bobbing his head in understanding and Katsuki was practically twitching on his cushion, muscles tense and nerves fried, no doubt nervous of what the boy might say.

"And this fog, it's your newest ability?"

"*That's* what you have to say?" The young fox burst, his shock evident in his voice. "After all that, after finding out I'm not even human, you want to know about the fucking fog?"

Todoroki shrugged. "We live in a world full of super powers, Katsuki. Mythology- or I suppose it isn't mythology after all… the Spirit world and the stories of it are ancient, older than quirks for sure," he informed the blonde, voice steady and sure. "It is fairly easy to believe that something so old could be real when you can literally create explosions from your hands."

Hinko chuckled and nodded. "That is a very mature way to look at it, young Todoroki. I must again express how surprised I am that Katsuki found *two* smart young men to take care of him."

"I don't need *taken care of you old cow!"*

"Katsuki," Todoroki scolded, placing a hand on his knee to keep him from launching himself across the table. "The fog?"

It took a few moments, but before long the blonde was settling back down, his tails resting behind him and curling around the two boys protectively. He crossed his arms with a huff. "It's just a fog. I've seen it around you, Shinsou, and A- one other person," he stuttered, clenching his fists. "I get these weird... feelings when I look at it for too long. A mix of sensations, like smells and sounds and tastes. I

think I know what it is but- I'm not sure." When Todoroki and Izuku just stared at him expectantly, the boy shrunk in on himself a little. "You know this already by now, but I can smell different emotions. It's how I know you're stressed, or that Izuku is happy. I can't tell *why* though, not just by the smell. The fog, it's kind of like that but… deeper."

"Deeper?"

The boys weren't the only ones watching him intently now. Hinko had had her suspicions on what the fog had been, but she hadn't quite expected Katsuki to come to his own conclusions. She was interested in learning what he thought about it.

"It's trauma." The young fox whispered, eyes fixated on the cup sitting in front of him. "At least, that's what I figured. I didn't realize it until I saw… someone in the hospital with it just pouring out of them. I thought maybe that's what it was at first, when it appeared around you, but then I saw it on Shinsou and he doesn't- he doesn't have a visible scar so it threw me off."

Todoroki was tense beside Katsuki, though he didn't pull away or appear frightened, just… tense. Hinko didn't like the fact that this boy appeared so strong at such a young age. Most would be terrified at the prospect of what he was learning.

"You said you can sense things when you look at it? Do you- do you know what happened?" He asks quietly. "Could you see it?"

But Katsuki was quick to shake his head. "I got a few sensations when I first noticed it but it- it felt *wrong* to look at it, to dig deeper, without you knowing about it or whatever."

"And now?" Hinko questioned, leaning forward slightly. "You have your second tail, which means this power should be fully developed. You'll be seeing it a lot more often. You'll need to learn how it works, how to control it." When the three boys only blinked at her, she hummed. "I have a theory-"

"Of fuckin' course you do, I told you she'd want to test it," Katsuki growled at the green-haired boy beside him.

Hinko clicked her tongue and shook her head. "I have a theory," she repeated, "of how the ability works. And I think perhaps you can make the fog go away."

That drew the boy's attention and he straightened, eyes like knives in her direction. "Make it go away? How?"

"Well, with young Todoroki's permission, I'd like you to touch it."

"The scar?"

She hummed and bobbed her head. "More importantly, the fog. You've described to me before that you feel like it is drawing you in, that you can't help but look at it sometimes." Katsuki nodded, his fists clenching in his lap. "I think perhaps the fox wants to look at it, to see what happened. Your fox particularly is very intuned to emotions," she explained before the blonde had a chance to argue. "However, you've learned how to use your senses with those emotions, and how to block them out."

"You think if he sees what happens," Todoroki said quietly, lips pressed into a curious line as he thinks, "then he'll be able to ignore the sensations after that?"

"Perhaps. Then, he may be able to learn how to block out the fog he sees around others."

Katsuki was shaking his head already, pushing himself to his feet as he began pacing. "No. No fuckin' way. I'm not going to dig into his head and make him relive his trauma," the fox growled, tails whipping angrily behind him.

"Kaachan, you can barely *breathe* in the same room as Shinsou sometimes," Izuku argued.

"I can *handle it*."

A pale hand reached up to snatch Katsuki's as he walked by, his fingers lacing with fingers and red eyes meeting brown and blue. The Todoroki boy smiles at Katsuki, just barely a shift of his lips, but it's there none the less and it makes some of the tension roll off Katsuki's shoulders.

"Katsuki, it is fine. I have dealt with people asking what happened my entire life. I've dealt with the nightmares and the stares and the rumors." With a gentle tug, he was able to pull the blonde back down onto the floor cushion to face him. "I do not mind you knowing. I knew eventually I would have to tell you anyway. And if this helps you, then I want to do it."

Katsuki scoffed, rolling his eyes. “You don’t know what the hell you want, IcyHot. I can handle a few smells and sounds.”

“Then kiss me,” the other boy countered, drawing Katsuki’s eyes to him immediately. Todoroki let go of the boy’s hands and shrugged. “Kiss me like you usually do. Go on.”

There was hesitation in the little fox’s movements, like he knew this was a trap but he couldn’t figure out how. Hinko knew he shot her a glance before raising his hands, suddenly determined to prove whatever Todoroki was trying to tell him wrong. His hands settled on the boy’s face, one on his unblemished cheek and one on his opposite jaw, wrapping gently around the back of his neck before yanking him forward into a heated kiss.

Todoroki’s hands came up to grab the boy’s wrists once they pulled away from each other, a sad sort of smile on his face. “Look at where your hands are, Katsuki,” he said softly. “You avoid my scar. I’m not stupid, I know it pains you to get too close to it. At first I thought it was because you didn’t like the look or feel of it, but I know better now.” With his grip on the blonde’s wrist, he moved the hand closer to the discoloured skin and smiled. “I promise, I’m okay with this. Please.”

Fingers smoothed over the skin just below the red mark, eyes searching for any sign of discomfort, before Katsuki sighed. “Fuckin’ fine. But I’m not fucking comforting you if you freak out or something. This is your own damn fault.”

Somehow, Hinko knew that was a lie.

Chapter End Notes

I love you all!

Please be aware there will be abuse references and such next chapter!

Drink water and love yourselves!

Chapter 11: Open Doors

Chapter Summary

I think someone asked for angst?

Chapter Notes

HI THIS CHAPTER HURT TO WRITE SO I HOPE IT HURTS TO READ TOO.

TRIGGER WARNINGS:
There is a lot of mention in this chapter about child abuse in regards to Shouto's home life. There's also a panic attack towards the beginning. Please be safe and love yourselves!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When Katsuki opened his eyes, it was dark and his body felt… weird.

There was a part of his mind that was settled on the ground in Auntie Hinko's training room, but the rest was floating somewhere in between there and… nowhere. Like he was just mist, floating around in the air with nothing to grab onto, nothing to ground him.

Why was he here again?

What was he doing?

"I can't look at him anymore-"

Mom?

"Every time I look at him, I see his father-"

Mom? Why are you crying?

Katsuki's feet were cold and bare across the wood floor. His arms hurt because the bandages were too tight. Natsu had tied them but he was still learning. A teapot screeched in the kitchen as Katsuki drew closer. Mom always drank tea to calm her down. She probably heard the screams and needed it to help. She got scared a lot when Katsuki was training. She never did it in front of him, but he knew she was crying a lot, he could see it because her eyes were puffy and her makeup rubbed off.

Dad didn't like it when she cried though. He didn't like it when any of them cried. She needed to stop before he saw her, before he hurt her too. Katsuki was strong enough to handle the pain, but Mom wasn't.

Mom? Why are you crying?

"I see his father-"

Why are you looking at me like that?

"I see his father-"

Mom, the tea is done.

"I can't look at him anymore- I can't do this-"

Mom, what are you doing?

The tea was scalding across his face, burning and eating away at him just like dad's fire. Briefly he wondered if this is what Touya felt like, if the hands holding him down would be familiar to his eldest brother, if Katsuki would die like he did. His throat hurt from screaming, his fingers red from blood as he scratched at the arms holding him down.

"I can't do this anymore-"

Mom why?

"I can't look at him"

Mommy you're hurting me!

"Oh my god, baby-"

You weren't supposed to hurt me too.

"Oh baby, what did I do?"

Something cold burst across his face, and he hoped maybe it would help but it only made him cry more, it only sharpened the pain already seeping into his skin.

"My baby- mommy didn't mean to. I-I didn't mean to-"

Mom? Why are you crying?

Coming back into his own body was like falling off a building. He

slammed back into his own ribs and skull, his heart pounding too hard and his skin too tight around him. Blinking took too much energy. His chest ached from trying to suck in desperate breaths. *Why aren't my lungs working?*

Before he knew what he was doing, he was scrambling backwards, away from grasping hands and calming words.

It was too much. *Too much*. Everything hurt. Even the air felt heavy and uncomfortable against his skin, grating and angry against the inside of his throat. His face burned where mom had hurt him-

Not my mom.

His arms were still sore from training-

Not my training.

Gods, why couldn't he keep his head on straight?

Someone was talking to him but there were hands over his ears, he couldn't hear them. He wanted to see who it was, but his eyes wouldn't open. Something heavy settled on his shoulders, warm against his back and throat. It wrapped around his stomach too, pressing close and hot, digging into both sides of his neck like a winter scarf. The scent of lightning on a beach, the taste of it burning the sand on the back of his tongue, the sound of it crackling and echoing inside the cavern of his chest.

Breathe with us, Katsuki.

The moon above him pushed and pulled, the ocean rising and falling, soft and cold against his bare feet.

In. Out. Match our breaths, okay?

He did as he was told, fingers clenching in the wet sand beneath him, letting the shore hold him up and the moon draw him back down to his body. By the time it was easier to breathe, he'd made it back to Auntie Hinko's shop, back into the arms of the two boys wrapped around him like sloths.

Shouto was holding onto him from the front, Katsuki dragged carefully into his lap so the dual-haired student could dig his face into the side of Katsuki's neck. He could feel Izuku behind him, arms wrapped around his shoulders in the way he always did when Katsuki

was suffering from nightmares or panic attacks, his face pressed against the other side of the fox's neck.

Their scents were calming around him, grounding, and he let his head drop down onto Shouto's shoulder in the hopes that this little huddle of theirs would consume him entirely. He couldn't help but thank whoever the fuck ran the universe that Auntie Hinko didn't press him right away about what had happened.

"*Fuck*," he choked out, his voice grated and raw in his throat. "What happened?"

"Your eyes went gold," Shouto said quietly, his voice just barely above a whisper and Katsuki was grateful for it. All of his senses were heightened and his ears twitched back against his skull, flattening in his hair as if it'd stop everyone from *breathing* so loudly. "You didn't say anything. It was like you weren't here anymore."

Katsuki let out a shallow breath and shook his head. "I wasn't. I was- I was at your house. I think. Fuck, I don't know, it was weird. Like I knew it wasn't me, but it was. It wasn't very focused. Like I was watching a movie on a sunburnt screen," he grumbled, trying to draw much needed air into his burning lungs. "Like everything was fuzzy but I knew what was happening. Like I was… I was in your head."

"You saw it then?" Shouto asked, his own fingers tightening in Katsuki's shirt.

But Katsuki shook his head, "I *lived* it… I could feel it, feel everything like- like it was me." A sob ripped through him and he clung tighter to the boy who's lap he sat in. The knowledge of knowing something like this had happened to Shouto was bad enough, actually experiencing it himself, knowing *exactly* what it felt like to him, what he was thinking, what he was seeing. It made Katsuki want to tear apart the entire world just to make sure it never happened again. "*Fuck*, Sho… It was like I was you. I knew what you were thinking, I could feel the vibrations of the screams in your throat. I-I *hated* it."

Shouto swallowed, his throat bobbing against the side of Katsuki's face. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have made you do that."

"Hah?" Without warning, Katsuki reeled back to stare at the boy, his red-gold eyes narrowing in anger and confusion. "The fuck are you talking about? I'm the one who got in *your* head, you idiot."

"But I made you live through the worst pain I've ever encountered,"

Shouto mumbled, his own face twisted in some sort of painful awareness. “I knew what it felt like for me. I knew that I never wanted anyone else to feel that too. And yet I still let you do it. I should have known-“

“You didn’t know shit,” Katsuki interrupted sharply, baring his sharpened teeth in warning. “None of us knew how this was going to play out. So don’t fucking apologize.”

“But-“

Izuku’s hold on Katsuki shifted and the boy reached out to tug lightly at Shouto’s red hair. “He’s right, Shouchan. We didn’t know his power was going to send him into the memory, only that it might show him things. You can’t blame yourself for that. Besides, now we *do* know, so Kaachan can avoid getting sucked back in hopefully.”

The greenette’s words sharpened in Katsuki’s mind and he sat up straight, eyes widening as something slid into place in his mind. *How the fuck had he not noticed?* The boys made questioning noises as the blonde shifted, raising his hand again and pressing his fingers lightly into the scar on the side of Shouto’s face, then harder, until he could feel the curve of his cheekbone and the press of the scar tissue.

The fog was gone.

Shouto tried to flinch away, only to freeze when Katsuki laughed. And laughed. And *laughed*.

He doubled over, head dropping back onto Shouto’s shoulders and arms wrapping around his waist as if he’d fall over if he didn’t have something to hold onto. He was distantly aware that he was crying again, and that Izuku had pulled away to sit next to them, watching with concern. He didn’t move his fingers away from the scar when he pulled back again, only caged the boy’s face in his hands properly before pulling him in for a kiss.

A kiss that tasted like frost and campfires. A kiss that didn’t leave the lingering taste of rot in the back of his throat.

And they’d have to have a talk about Shouto’s past eventually. Have to have a talk about the bandages Katsuki had felt on his arms during the memory, the fear that he had of his own father. They’d need to talk about whether it was still happening and if Katsuki needed to figure out how to hide Endeavor’s body in the future. But for now? For now he just enjoyed the feeling of gentle lips on his and hesitant fingers

gripping his hips.

For now, he just enjoyed Shouto.

By the time they'd left Auntie Hinko's and made it back to their house, Katsuki was *hungry*. He wasn't sure if it was the fox in him or the human, but it wanted to devour the thin body beneath it. And right now, that body was Shouto.

They'd barely entered Izuku's room before the blonde had Shouto shoved up against the door, his fingers tight around Shouto's waist and his lips bruising and biting and *consuming*. Gods... he couldn't get over the way Shouto tasted without the taste of decay lingering in the background. He tasted heavenly now. Like Izuku did, but different. It was like Katsuki was stuck in a snowstorm with no hope of escape, only he didn't want to. He let the snow surround him, freeze him, bury him until he couldn't breathe anything but frost.

"Mmf... Katsuki... Katsuki, I can't breathe!"

Katsuki didn't let up, even as Shouto pulled away. He just moved on, pressing his lips against his chin instead, his cheekbones, his scar, his throat. He found a spot just under the boy's ear that punched a moan out of him and Katsuki took full advantage of the new information. At some point he added his teeth into the mix, nipping and sucking and licking at Shouto's throat and collarbones, careful to only leave marks where they could be hidden. He was particularly fond of a bright purple on that bloomed on the boy's shoulder, and when Katsuki let go of his collar, it fell to cover it perfectly.

Good, the fox growled.Then maybe if that bastard Endeavor tried anything funny, he'd see that Shouto already belonged to someone. *The only bruises you'll have are from us.*

"I don't think that's entirely a healthy mindset," Shouto huffed, his head tilted back onto the door as he struggled to catch his breath.

But Katsuki didn't care. He pressed his entire body up against the other boy, letting him feel the mindset Katsuki was in. They both gasped as they rubbed against each other, and Shouto's eyes found something behind Katsuki. "Izuku-" a moan interrupted whatever he was going to say as Katsuki worked on the other side of his shoulder, fingers gripping and pulling them closer together. "Y-you shouldn't be left out."

"Oh I'm not!" Izuku squeaked. Katsuki knew if he turned right now, the younger boy would be cherry red. "I-I'm enjoying just watching. I mean! Um... it's just, that you two look really good together," he stuttered. "Besides, I can kiss Kaachan anytime I want, since I live with him."

Another roll of the hips had Shouto dropping his head back against the door with a *thud* and he arched slightly into Katsuki's hands. "Ma-maybe we should slow down, Ka-Kat..." But even as he said it, the dual-haired boy grabbed at the sides of the blonde's head and tugged him back up, connecting their lips together hard enough for their teeth to *clink*. It didn't stop either of them. Didn't stop hands from roaming or tongues from fighting for dominance.

With an impressive bout of strength, Shouto twisted them until Katsuki was the one pressed against the door, punching a moan out of the fox in retaliation. From that angle, Katsuki could see Izuku on the bed, his eyes blown wide and a pillow sat strategically in his lap. He looked absolutely wrecked and they hadn't even touched him. Katsuki wasn't sure why, but that did things to him.

"*Shit. Fuck!"*

Shouto chuckled from where he had his face pressed up against Katsuki's throat, pulling away to admire the bright mark that sat just below the boy's ear. It'd be difficult to hide, but Shouto didn't seem to care. Instead he grabbed Katsuki's wrists and pressed them level with his head against the door, diving in for another *very* heated kiss that had their lungs straining for air. Gods, what Katsuki wouldn't do to see Shouto-

The doorknob rattled and everyone froze, Katsuki's heart lodging deep into his throat.

"Katsuki? Izuku? Why is the door locked?"

Izuku squeaked into his pillow and Shouto was sent stumbling backwards as Katsuki pushed him, their eyes wide and frantic. There was no way Momma Inko was going to look at them and *not* know exactly what they'd been up to.

"Katsuki? Open the door!"

"God- mom *please*-" the fox whined, pressing back against it as she tried to open it.

The woman went silent for a moment before he heard her huff. "Midoriya Katsuki, you have until the count of three to open this door, do you understand me?"

Fuck.

He took the entire three seconds to try and straighten out his shirt and hair before tugging the door open just enough for him to stand in the opening, blocking at least Shouto from view. He swallowed and tried to give the woman his best glare, but it was no doubt filled with panic and embarrassment. "*What?*"

Momma Inko raised her eyebrows at him, her eyes scanning his face and hair and clothes before settling on his ear. No... not his ear.

The fucking hickey. Goddamn it all, he was going to kill that IcyHot.

The green haired woman hummed and gave him a bright smile, the one that honestly scared him and told he they were *definitely* going to regret this later. "I just came to tell you all that dinner is ready. I made enough for Shouto as well. Oh, and let's make sure to leave the bedroom doors *open*, alright?"

Auntie Hinko hadn't been lying when she'd told them that Katsuki would start noticing the fog more now that his second tail had appeared. He could see it everywhere, though after the first try with Shouto, the Kitsune had managed to learn to dull that sense a bit so it wasn't overwhelming. It'd taken almost a week to figure out, but he'd gotten to a point where the fog was just more background noise. Where he didn't really notice it unless he was staring at a person or if it was big and consuming enough. (All Might's fog was hard to avoid, especially during class. But Katsuki noticed it didn't seem as bad when he was in his regular form instead of his 'Small Might' body. So that at least was a relief.)

Though he could manage to block it out for the most part now, he still saw it in places he didn't quite expect to.

Like the way the fog settled heavy in Kirishima's hair, staining it a soft black instead of his normal red. *Katsuki stopped calling him Shitty Hair after the first day of noticing it*. Like the way it seeped out of Mr. Aizawa's chest the same way it did Present Mic's, a steady beat to the way it moved. *The beat of a heart broken too many years ago.*

Sometimes the fog came and went. Sometimes it wasn't permanent

around someone.

Kaminari's fog always seemed to appear during training, splattered across his chest and splintering up his arms, only to fade a few hours or days later. Shinsou's fog was always there, but the intensity of it varied depending on the day. Sometimes it was barely a wisp of smoke, other days it was a storm cloud of inky black.

He still hadn't gotten up the courage to look too deeply into the his smoke. Afraid of it sending him into an attack like Shouto's.

Speaking of Shouto.

He had fog again.

It'd started appearing a week after Shouto finding out about everything. Like Kaminari's it came and went. Sometimes circling the boy's wrists, sometimes hovering in ugly splotches on his ribs and chest and back. None of them were as bad as the scar across his face had been, and none of them sent Katsuki into flashbacks like that one had. But he could still feel them.

Since that first time, Katsuki hadn't bothered to avoid Shouto's fog, especially as it started popping up again. It was easier to look at now that he knew what he was doing. So he looked and he felt.

He felt fingers, hot and burning, wrapping around his wrists. He felt blunt impacts against his ribs, felt them crack under the pressure. He felt the scorching burns that etched their ways across his back.

It went on for two weeks until Katsuki couldn't stand it anymore. Until he grabbed the boy with smoke around his throat and dragged him into the labs where Izuku was working.

"*Out*," he growled in Hatsume's direction, the pink-haired girl being the only one in the room with them. Katsuki wasn't sure if it was the way he said it, or the way both his tails were visible as he bared his fangs at her, but she had the smarts enough to shrug and make her way out of the room.

"Kaachan? What's wrong?"

Katsuki's fingers tightened around Shouto's wrist before he practically threw the smaller boy at Izuku. Shouto went easily, only stumbling slightly, eyes wide with confusion and surprise.

“Fucking old man is hurting him again,” Katsuki growled, his claws digging into the meat of his palm as he began to pace. (He did that a lot, Auntie Hinko had pointed out once- the pacing. Whenever he was irritated or emotional.) “I’m gonna kill him. I don’t care if he’s the number two hero. I’m gonna rip his throat out with my goddamn teeth,” he continued, a low rumble building up in his chest and vibrating through his throat.

Izuku frowned, glancing up at Shouto, who’s face had gone oh so carefully blank. “Shouchan? What’s going on?”

The half-and-half bastard shook his head and swallowed. Katsuki could practically smell the lie before it even left the boy’s lips. “Katsuki, please calm down. Whatever you’re- whatever you think you know. You’re wrong. I spent the weekend with my father training. That’s all.”

“Training? *Training?*” Katsuki spat, turning sharply towards the other two boys. “I’ve seen you after training, Shouto. You don’t get fog after *training*.”

Shouto tensed at that, his eyes narrowing slightly in suspicion. “You said the fog was gone, that you couldn’t see mine anymore.”

“I said the fog on your face was gone,” the Kitsune corrected. “But you keep getting more. I can’t fucking avoid it, Shouto.”

There was a burning in his chest and his teeth *ached* with the need to bite something, to sink his fangs into soft flesh and *claim and claim and claim*. The fox wanted out and it was tearing at his ribcage like a rabid beast, scarring the inside of Katsuki’s chest with need. Nobody had any right to hurt what was *his*. Nobody could go after *his* pack and get away with it. The fox didn’t care if he didn’t stand a chance against a pro hero. It didn’t care if he could be charred in an instant. It wanted to protect Shouto with every fiber of it’s being.

Fuck, what’s wrong with me?

“Katsuki, you need to calm down,” Shouto said. And *fuck*, Katsuki hated it when he used that tone of voice. That dead, empty voice that he’d had when they’d all first met. That void sound that reminded Katsuki that Shouto might be strong as hell, but he was fragile and unlike Katsuki, he wouldn’t fight back. He would hide and deflect, he would take the brunt of the attack to avoid the fallout later on. The fox *hated* it.

“I can’t *calm down*, you idiot. What he’s doing isn’t right,” Katsuki argued.

Shouto’s fists clenched at his sides and the blonde wondered if maybe, just maybe the boy would fight back for once. But instead he took a deep breath and leveled Katsuki with that dead stare. “Whatever you think my father is doing, I can assure you he’s not. I appreciate your worry, Katsuki, but I ask that you stop digging into this. You’ll only get us both hurt and I won’t let you do that.”

Screw that, the fox growled. “I don’t care if I get hurt,” the blonde spat back, shoulders hunching with the need to transform. “I can’t let you keep going back home to that bastard. I’ll tell the teachers-“

“If you do that, then you’ll lose me.”

The fox fell silent immediately, Katsuki’s tails going limp behind him and his ears standing at attention. Something in his chest- *his heart* – thumped *hard*. Behind the dual-haired boy, Izuku whined, his fingers twisting into Shouto’s uniform, but those mismatched eyes never left Katsuki’s.

“If you tell the teachers then I’ll never speak to you again,” Shouto threatened, the sharp scent of gunpowder and ash hanging heavy in the air between them. “Whatever you think is happening,” he said carefully, “it’s not that bad. I can handle it, and it’s only for a few more weeks. The Sports Festival is coming up and I need to train so I can win. So I can show him that I *can* win. And I’m going to do it my way. I’m going to do it without using his quirk.” A sneer snuck through his stone expression before being quickly wiped away. “I’m going to win the sports festival without using his fire, and he’ll have to give up. He’ll have to realize that I’m never going to turn into him.”

That’s what this was about?

“Shouchan-“

“You think he’s going to stop just because you’re being disobedient?” Katsuki questioned, outrange and horror building up in his chest. “You think just because you say *no* that he’ll be fine and dandy with it?”

Briefly he wondered if this is what Touya felt like, if the hands holding him down would be familiar to his eldest brother, if Katsuki would die like he did. Memories of grasping hands and burnt flesh surged through his head, the screams echoing in his skull like coyotes.

Shouto was shaking now. Hell, Katsuki was shaking. But the taller of the three took a calming breath and squared his shoulders. “Katsuki, you don’t have to worry about me. He’ll stop in a few weeks. When I win the festival-“

“He didn’t stop with Touya!”

Katsuki knew it was the wrong thing to say the second it left his mouth. He knew it was a line he wasn’t supposed to cross, knew the moment he said it that this conversation was over. Done. He’d lost whatever argument it was he was trying to win. He could see it in the way Shouto shut down. It wasn’t like before, where he just got that careful mask in place. No, this was something different. Something deeper. Katsuki could see the rage in those bi-coloured eyes, but the rest of Shouto had completely locked up, completely checked out of this conversation.

“Where do you know that name?”

And because he was a dumbass who didn’t know when to quit, Katsuki scoffed. “I’ve been in your head dumbass.”

“Kaachan, stop!”

“You thought you were going to die that day,” Katsuki continued, trying to ignore the way his own voice shook with emotion. “I know- I *know* you were thinking about it. You were wondering if that’s how To- how *he* felt when he died. You were wondering if you were going to die too. And if you don’t get your stupid head out of your ass, he’s going to kill you too!”

The words echoed off the metal walls around them, emotional and raw.

Shouto stared at him for too long, the silence hanging around them like ash. “Just a few more weeks,” Shouto said surely.

And then he was gone.

And Katsuki was screaming.

“Do you hear that?”

The cat glanced down from its perch atop the temple gates, two tails dangling lazily below it. The fox below it tilted it’s head, orange ears

twitching as it listened.

“Listen how it screams,” the cat that wasn’t a cat said. The sound echoed and carried on the breeze, fury and anger and worry all mixed and mangled into one awful sound. It rested its head on its paws and hummed in content. “Do you think it’s new?” The two tailed creature asked, piercing green eyes curious and hungry. “A kitsune’s cries can shake the world they say. It has been a while since I’ve tasted something so sweet.”

With a deft leap, the fox wrapped its hands around the top of the gate, swinging itself around until it was perched beside the cat. Pitch black hair fluttered in the breeze, long and dark against pale skin. The kitsune’s anger carried well across the distance, but it’s scent was weak and new. “It’s a bastard,” the fox said with a wicked grin. “There’s no clan scent on it so it is weak. Poor thing, probably doesn’t even know how yummy it tastes.”

“What do you say to a snack,” the cat asked, raising itself onto its paws and stretching into an arch. “It’s been ages since we’ve had a proper date, and I think a hunt is just the way to celebrate.”

“Celebrate what, my dear?”

The cat grinned. “The new king of course. Didn’t you hear?” The cat walked deftly across the fox’s lap, it’s two tails brushing teasingly under its chin and the fox hummed in question. “Rumor has it Queen Mitsuki had a child that she’s been keeping a secret for over a decade. First born too. The king was furious with her.”

“A bastard?”

A low chuckle and the cat stretched again before pouncing off the gate, body shifting until grey fur morphed into pale dark skin and matted grey hair. “Oh no. The queen married the poor thing’s father. By human law of course, not clan law, but marriage none the less. The little prince is purely within clan law to take the throne.”

The fox dropped down beside the cat and leaned forward, bumping its nose against the two-tail’s jaw affectionately. “I’m sure the princess is happy with that knowledge.”

“Positively ecstatic,” the other smirked, nuzzling the fox back.

“And how do you know all this?”

“I have my ways, little fox,” the cat responded with a nip to the jaw. “The drama in that clan is as loud as it’s queen. Rumor has it the other clans are using this as an excuse.”

The fox pouted as the cat pulled away. “An excuse for what?”

“To gain power.”

“They wish to kill the little king?”

The cat grinned.

“They wish to devour him.”

Chapter End Notes

Oof, that was just a rollercoaster wasn't it? I know a LOT happened in that chapter and it went kind of fast, so forgive me. I just wanted a lot to happen as we lead up to the sports festival. For my Shinsou lovers, don't worry, we'll get him back soon. I'm already working on the next few chapters. :)

As always, you guys are wonderful and I cannot handle all the amazing comments I'm getting!

As a Note for anyone who's confused:
Most of the 'trauma' that Katsuki is seeing later in the chapter will probably be explained, but I'll tell you what I can just in case you're confused. Kaminari's fog is coming from the fact that I headcannon his quirk burns him when he uses it too much. It acts like normal lightning and gives him litchenberg scars, but they go away after a few hours/days depending on how bad they are, or if he goes to recovery girl. All Might's fog comes from his wound on his side obviously, that he received from All for One. Kirishima's trauma comes from his mental issues with his hair and insecurities. I can't tell you about Shinsou or EraserMic trauma yet because it'll probably come up later, but I'm sure you can probably guess. :)

Chapter 12: Take a Look

Chapter Summary

Katsuki tries, Dadzawa and Presentation Michael just want to help, and the pack simps hard.

UPDATE:
I edited the first scene of this chapter because people were having a hard time with Aizawa calling Katsuki "midoriya". I was afraid of that when I wrote it, but I'm going to fix it to make it easier :) Hopefully this is better.

Chapter Notes

So I know last chapter was a heartbreak and a half. Sorry not sorry! No trigger warnings for this chapter, just remember there's a soft reference of implied abuse at the beginning of this chapter since we're getting the aftermath of what happened between Katsuki and Shouto.

This chapter takes place about a week after last chapter. We're leading up to the Sports Festival, but I've got some things to get going before then, so bare with me!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Shouta was *exhausted*.

Why he had ever agreed to become a teacher, on top of his underground hero job, he had no idea. He was sure Nezu had worked some sort of mojo over him to get him to agree. Or maybe just hit him while he was sleep deprived and weak, because he didn't even remember agreeing. But never in his short career of teaching had he ever had a class like this one. His *problem children*. They were exhausting and loud and annoying. And he would honestly give anything for them if they asked.

Probably.

Hizashi joked that he didn't know they'd be adopting so many kids. Shouta didn't quite find it funny.

Needless to say when he'd given his class his phone number and home address in the case of *emergencies* only, he hadn't ever expected any of

them to act on that information. None of his classes ever had before, and he suspected none of the others ever would. It was just this *one* class. This *one* class that was sure to send him an early grave with every curve ball they threw at him.

“Who’s at the door, Zash?”

The doorbell had rang only moments ago, and having lived with the man long enough, Shouta had expected some sort of yell about who it’d been or some sort of ear-bursting greeting. They didn’t get visitors often, if ever. Especially not at ten o’clock at night, an hour before his patrol as supposed to start.

When he didn’t get a reply the underground hero made his way out of the kitchen, coffee in hand, to where his husband was ushering one of his students in through the doorway.

Midoriya Katsuki looked awful.

Granted, he’d been looking awful for about a week now, but even more so now. There were bags under his eyes to rival Shouta’s and his blonde hair was wet and flat from the rain outside. There was anger in his eyes, but the way he hunched in on himself under his coat told Shouta that the anger was probably aimed more at himself than anything else. He couldn’t help the sharp stab of worry in his chest at seeing the boy. *This was going to be a long night*.

“Midoriya,” he greeted, taking a long sip of his coffee as Hizashi took the boy’s coat and hung it up. “Did something happen?”

The blonde shuffled on his feet, fists clenching at his sides and face scrunching up like he really wanted to say something but didn’t know where to start. After too long in silence, he gestured towards the kitchen and raised an eyebrow. “Mic made pancakes for dinner. Why don’t you join us and you can tell us why you’re here.”

That made the boy scoff, shooting the louder blonde a raised eyebrow. “Who makes pancakes for dinner?”

Mic laughed, the sound echoing and grating on the ears, not bothered by the way the boy scowled at him. “Breakfast for dinner is the best meal, little listener!” With that, he turned towards Shouta and smiled, seeming to understand that the boy wasn’t very comfortable there with them. “I have to get to my show. Do you need me to stay?”

But Shouta shook his head and waved him off. He knew Hizashi’s

show didn't start for a couple of hours yet, but it was clear it was going to take some prodding for Midoriya to open up, and he'd probably be more likely to do so without the other pro there to hear it. So he returned the short kiss Hizashi gave him on his way out before turning and heading back towards the kitchen, not looking back to see if Midoriya was following.

"You can ask you know," he said once they'd both settled at the kitchen table, plates in front of them stacked with pancakes and syrup. The blonde grunted, eyebrows drawing down in question and Shouta waved towards the door. "About me and Mic."

But the boy only shrugged and glanced away. "Already knew."

Now *that* was surprising. Hizashi was very outgoing and touchy, but they had a strict rule not to be public about their relationship. The fact that Midoriya had just been able to tell was… interesting. "Okay," he said slowly, deciding to leave that matter for another time. "Do you want to talk about why you're here, or do you want to sit in silence?"

The question wasn't meant to be sarcastic. Shouta knew better than anyone that sometimes it's best just to have someone there with him, even if they weren't talking, and he figured Midoriya knew that too. Still, he could also tell that the explosive boy really had something he wanted, or *needed*, to talk about and Shouta just needed to be patient.

"You said we could come to you if… if we need help," the boy said slowly, face twisting up as if just admitting the fact was painful to him. Shouta nodded, taking another sip of his coffee as he waited for him to continue. "What if… what if *I* don't need help, but someone else does and they won't ask for it."

Shouta forced himself not to tense at the question, mind already reeling through possible people and scenarios that the boy could be talking about. "Can you explain further?"

"Like-" the explosive blonde paused, clenching his teeth as he fought with himself, his muscles coiled with the need to run away. "Like if I know someone is hurting… or being hurt, or something… *hypothetically*, I should help, right? I should tell someone?"

"Midoriya," Shouta said slowly, placing his cup on the table slowly and leaning forward until he could rest his elbows on his knees. He pushed away the hungry anger in his chest at the idea of someone hurting his kids, and focused on the stressed boy in front of him. The one who was hurting *now*. *"Katsuki.* Is this person in danger? Are they

being hurt regularly?"

He shifted in his seat, eyes narrowing as he debated on what he could tell Shouta. The teacher figured Midoriya didn't want to betray the trust of whoever it was that was being hurt, but wanted to help more than anything.

After a long second, the boy nodded. "I think so? One of them I can't be sure. I haven't- I can't-" He grunted, reaching up a hand to run through his unruly blonde hair. "This is fucking hard to explain without you knowing about-" Shouta let the boy struggle with his thoughts, patient and quiet, until the boy's shoulders slumped and he glared at the table. "You saw my fox at the USJ."

"I did," Shouta said, because he had. He'd known the boy had a secondary quirk, some sort of transformation quirk that was in his file but wasn't described. He apparently didn't use it often so it was only documented in his school files as much as it needed to be. What that had to do with the matter at hand though, he couldn't figure out.

"Well it comes with… other stuff," Midoriya explained, shrugging his shoulders and crossing his arms protectively over his chest. "Heightened senses, the transformation, shit like that. And recently I've started being able to… I don't know- I can fucking smell trauma or something. I can see it when it's bad enough." The boy shifted in his seat again before launching himself to his feet to begin pacing, his hands flying around him as he spoke. "And if I look hard enough I can see *why* there's trauma, right? I can feel the hands that caused it. I can hear the voices and smell the blood or whatever the fuck it was. I don't have full control over it or anything, and some peoples are worse than others, but it's *there* and I can't just ignore it! But digging feels… it feels wrong, you know? I got permission for S- from someone once… to look you know? And it was awful. God fuck, it was *awful*," he groaned, tugging at his hair.

There was a frightened sort of panic in Midoriya's eyes that had Shouta wanting to comfort the boy, but he remained where he was.

"It's like I was there, like it was *me* who was being hurt. So I haven't- I haven't looked at anyone else's fog-"

"Fog?"

He nodded, waving a hand like it didn't matter. "It looks like fog, like black smoke, hovering over whatever area the trauma is from. Like you and Present Mic, it sits on your chests. Like Sh- like Todoroki had

it over his eye," the boy said carefully.

"You can see mine and Mic's?"

"Yeah, but I- I don't want to look because last time I looked I got sucked in and it-" a sob choked in the back of the boy's throat and Shouta stood then, reaching his hands out to rest heavy on the boy's shoulders, stopping his pacing. "I was *scared*. I didn't know if I was going to get out. I didn't even know if I was *me* anymore. But- but there are people who are still hurting and I feel like I need to look so I know what's wrong so I can help."

There was… a lot to unpack there, the pro decided as he lead Midoriya back to his seat and helped him sit. He pulled his own chair closer so he only had to duck his head to speak to the boy. "Can you tell me who it is that you think is being hurt? You said 'one of them', are there multiple people?" He had his suspicions of course, he wasn't blind, but without more information, there was very little for Shouta to actually do.

Sharp teeth dug into Midoriya's lip and he tensed at the question before shaking his head. "I can't- I said I wouldn't say anything. Well, no- I didn't. But they asked me not to so- so I can't. The other one," he said, glaring down at his hands in his lap, "I don't know for sure if they're being hurt. I can't- their fog is always there but it fades sometimes, it isn't as bad. Other times it's so thick I can't even *breathe*," he choked out. "But- but I haven't looked because I don't know what will happen if I do. It's not like I can exactly practice on this part of my quirk. People don't exactly want their trauma broadcast to others and I'd rather not have some sort of flashback episode in the middle of school or something."

So they were students, Shouta thought, confirming some of his suspicions. He sighed because the boy was right. It was Shouta's job to help these kids control their quirks, but unfortunately people were sensitive to trauma and baring it all open for someone else is hard to do.

"I can't help them if I don't know who it is, Midoriya."

Instead of gently urging the boy to tell him, it seemed to only make him angry. He shot to his feet again and *growled*, two black and orange tails appearing behind him and nearly knocking his chair back with the force of their thrashing. "You're a *pro hero*!" The boy spat, throwing his hands up in the air. "Why can't you just- why can't you

figure it out on your own? I can't tell you- I *can't*. I want to but he said if I did then he'd never speak to me again and- and-"

Panic settled in his features again and his tails went limp behind him. Shouta frowned, watching as the boy realized he'd probably said too much already. The hero was about to calm him, to assure him that he'd figure it out on his own now that he knew there was something to figure out, but he was interrupted by a shrill ring.

Midoriya jumped in surprise, pulling out his phone and staring down at it. "It's my mom," he whispered, and Shouta could hear the exhaustion in the boy's voice as she turned. "I have to go home."

Shouta walked the boy to the door and waited as he put his coat on before placing a hand on the boy's tense shoulder. "Midoriya," he said quietly, carefully as to not spook the kid. "Thank you for telling me what you could. I'll look into it. As for your quirk," red eyes shot up to stare at him in confusion and Shouta took the moment of surprise to gently nudge the boy out the door. "Meet me tomorrow after school. We'll see what we can do about training you for it. Send me a text when you make it home."

By the time the boy was gone and Shouta was able to finally sit down on the couch and close his eyes, he'd completely forgotten about his pancakes, no doubt cold by now.

He sighed.

"These problem children will be the death of me."

Something was wrong.

Despite popular belief, Shinsou was actually really good at reading people. He might not be great at communicating, but he was a master at social cues. With his quirk, he had to be. He had to know what buttons to push, how to get people to talk, how to get them to answer. True, his *heritage* helped with that, but he still had to know people.

And he knew Katsuki.

Not as well as he should. The blonde was surprisingly private considering how loud he was and the fact that Izuku couldn't lie to save his life. But still, even though he was hard to read sometimes, Shinsou knew him well enough to see when something was wrong..

And something was obviously wrong.

The Kitsune was… more irritable than usual, and that was saying something. He was quiet, like he was sulking and pissed and hurt all at the same time. It wasn't a good look on him and wasn't something any of them were used to. Shinsou suspected it had something to do with Todoroki, but the dual-haired student didn't appear any different, other than the fact that he and Katsuki were avoiding each other more than usual.

Which was concerning.

Because they weren't stupid. The pack had jokingly started calling the three of them Mom, Dad, and Papa as if the pack was one giant, slightly dysfunctional family. And they were, Shinsou supposed. They hadn't known each other for longer than maybe a couple of months, but he'd never felt closer to anyone in his life. It was weird, but knowing what Katsuki was, it wasn't at the same time.

Still, Mom and Dad were fighting and it was unsettling.

It set something uncomfortable rolling in Shinsou's stomach and he could feel the spirit inside him stirring with the need to *fix*. To help and serve. He had to do something, but he didn't know what.

"Okay I *know* I'm not the only one who's noticed it."

Shinsou glanced up from his notes to looked at Kaminari across the table. The two of them, Kirishima, Mina, and Sero were all huddled together at a table in the library to study during their last free hour of the day, while Katsuki had said something about extra training and Shouto was spending time with Izuku in the labs. Even with the three parents gone, the tension still hung in the air like a scratchy blanket and Shinsou was glad he wasn't the only one who felt it.

"Oh thank *god*," Mina whined, stretching her arms out and dropping her head onto the table. "I thought I was just imagining things because I'm a simp and I ship them so hard," she groaned. "But I'm right, right? There's something going on?"

"They're definitely dating," Kirishima chimed in with a frown. "They haven't told me, but it's not that hard to notice. Plus, I saw Kaachan and Shouto making out behind the gym like a week and a half ago."

"I saw Izuku and Shouto in the labs *yesterday*," Kaminari added.

Mina sighed, a small smile gracing her lips as she propped her head on her hands. “I think they’re all cute together.”

“Yeah but something went wrong,” Shinsou grumbled, pushing his notes aside slightly to show he was invested in the conversation. “Katsuki’s been extra prissy lately, and you’ve seen how often his fox has been showing. I think it’s harder for him to control when he’s overly emotional.” And that was *dangerous*. Shinsou didn’t know if Katsuki was aware of the danger he was putting himself in with using his fox more often. Didn’t know if he recognized the stench of *yokai* that he was putting off. It set the purple haired boy on edge, made him paranoid. Like every time he was around the other boy, there was someone watching them. Someone prowling. Someone *hunting*. And Katsuki didn’t even know what he was doing.

Sero leaned forward onto the table, his head ducked slightly in secret as he spoke. “You think whatever it is is just between Kaachan and Shouto? Since like, Kami saw Izuku and Shouto making out yesterday and the other two live together so I feel like we’d *definitely* know if they were fighting.”

“Yeah,” Kirishima sighed. “I mean, mom and dad aren’t super touchy feely in the first place, but even I can tell they’ve been distant the past week. Do you think one of them got jealous or something?”

Somehow, Shinsou doubted that. It felt like something deeper. Katsuki was the kind to get jealous, sure, but only if someone outside of the pack started messing with them. Shinsou couldn’t see the blonde getting upset at Shouto or Izuku for it. No, it had to be something else.

“He’s training with Aizawa tight after class,” Shinsou mumbled, drawing raised eyebrows in his direction. “I only know because I usually train with him but he said Katsuki asked for extra help.”

“I’m sorry,” Mina interrupted, raising a hand to stop him. She shook her head, paused, and took a deep breath. “He what now? Are you telling me Midoriya Katsuki, our hard headed, stubborn, ‘I’ll be number one hero’, pack mother *asked* for extra help? *Extra help*? And you didn’t think that was worrying?”

Shinsou rolled his eyes. “Of course I did. That’s why I brought it up.”

Kaminari tossed his hands up in the air and whined, his golden hair fluttering in the small breeze the motion set off. “We have to fix this!” He cried, reaching across the table to grab at Shinsou’s hands. The purple haired boy tensed at the action, but didn’t pull away. (*He could*

never pull away from those hands.) “Toshi! Mom and Dad are going to get a divorce and we’re all gonna have to choose sides! I don’t wanna choose sides!”

“I call dibs on mom,” Kirishima said quickly, shrugging slightly at their bewildered expressions. “What? I’m the only one that can calm him down. Bro loves me.”

“I’ll have to go with dad,” Sero chimed in. “At least he doesn’t threaten to kill me three times a day.”

Mina pouted from beside Shinsou and huffed. “Well I’m not choosing either of them! I’m going with Papa because he’s a sweetheart who just looks like he’s stuck in the middle and he deserves love too.”

“Or,” Shinsou sighed, rolling his eyes again and shaking his head. “We can figure out what happened, help them fix it, and stave off this supposed divorce before it happens.”

The others nodded in agreement, Kaminari pulling away in his excitement to come up with a plan.

Shinsou meanwhile, tried not to lament the loss of those warm fingers and the little shocks they always sent through his system when the boy was happy. A voice sounding eerily similar to Mina’s laughed in the back of Shinsou’s mind.

You’re such a simp.

“I think they should fight it out,” Shinsou said suddenly, interrupting the pack’s plans to lock the boys in a closet until they made up. They all blinked at him and he shrugged. “That might not be the healthiest way, but think about it. Katsuki is rough. He’s very animalistic because of his fox, and he’s always itching for a fight. He has more energy than he knows what to do with, and he bottles up his emotions until they explode and then he doesn’t know what to do with them. Shouto is different though. He’s calm, collected, but he still gets angry. He was trained not to show his emotions, not to let them get in the way of being a hero and getting the job done.”

The others blinked at him and Mina hummed, nodding slightly. “So Kaachan is bottling it up because he doesn’t know how to deal with it, and Shouto is bottling it up because that’s how he thinks he needs to deal with it.”

“Exactly.”

“But making them fight it out?” Kirishima frowned, worry creased across his brow. “I don’t know, bro. It doesn’t sound very healthy. Shouldn’t they just talk it out?”

Shinsou shrugged and leaned forward on his elbows. “Normally, I’d say yeah, probably. But neither of these two know how to talk to anyone outside of us, and they barely talk with us. When have you ever known Katsuki to talk about his feelings? And Shouto is so fucking awkward that he wouldn’t even know where to start. But Katsuki can’t keep his mouth shut when he’s fighting, and Shouto will talk if Katsuki sets the stage, if he knows the expectations.”

“Wow Toshi,” Kaminari breathed, big golden eyes staring at him like he had two heads. “You’re so smart. How do you know so much about people.”

“Um… I just pay attention,” he stuttered slightly, glancing away from the blonde and ignoring Mina’s knowing look. “Helps with my quirk.”

Lucky for him, Kirishima chimed in with a fist pumped into the air, a big grin on his face.

“Alright! Operation Stop the Divorce is a go! Phase one: battle royal!”

Katsuki felt like he should have expected Present Mic to be in the teacher’s lounge when he showed up after school. He should have expected that Mr. Aizawa would have brought the loud bastard along with him after the teen had stormed his way into their house the night before.

Still, Katsuki had at least been nice enough to leave his own boyfriend(s) in the labs. Mr. Aizawa could have at least had the same decency.

“Don’t look at me like that,” the Eraser hero scolded, rolling his eyes. “He’s here to help your training.”

Which… Katsuki did not expect. “How?”

“Well, you said you see trauma on both of us, right?” Katsuki nodded and the man shrugged. “Now you have two people to test your quirk on. I told Mic roughly how it works, but we should sit down so you can explain it to us fully.”

Katsuki shuffled on his feet, hands shoved in his pockets as he glanced

around the lounge, glad to see no one else was there. Which… was probably the plan, he supposed. But he did as he was asked and took a seat, waiting for one of the adults to start up the conversation. “What do you need to know?”

“Well, how it works would be a good start,” Aizawa said, the statement not meant to sound antagonistic, but Katsuki still tensed as if it was. “Explain to us what you see. Tell us how you accessed it that first time, when you had the flashback. What was it like?”

And so he did. He explained the fog and what it looked like, explained the feelings he got when he looked at it for too long, how he couldn’t be too close to it for long periods of time before it started to get overwhelming. He told them of Auntie Hinko and how she’d helped him sort of figure out what it was and how she was the one to tell him to touch it. (Not that he told them about who Auntie Hinko *was*, obviously.) He left Shouto’s name out of it, and was extremely careful about the details he gave in regards to the memory he experienced, but the story was the same regardless.

The feeling of the hands holding him down. The thoughts that weren’t his running through his head. The pain blooming across his face and the screams that scraped his throat raw.

How it felt dropping back into his body like an anchor in the ocean. Sinking and sinking into the depths with no hope of stopping.

Both teachers were silent and patient, only asking questions when they needed extra clarification, but much to the kitsune’s relief, neither of them asked who’s memory it was that he originally experienced, nor did they pry on who’s fog he could see past what he’d already told them.

“What about ours?” Present Mic asked, his expression strangely calm and relaxed.

And it was weird seeing them both after school hours. Present Mic had ditched his neck speaker thing and had his hair pulled up into a ponytail instead of his normal banana shaped do. His headphones were replaced with hearing aids, which had surprised Katsuki as much as it hadn’t. Seeing him look so calm though was the real kicker. He looked entirely too serious that it almost set Katsuki on edge if he wasn’t so relieved at the way they were taking him seriously.

“It sits right here,” he said, gesturing to the spot just to the left of his sternum. “Like where your heart is kind of. It’s not as strong as the

other one's I've seen, but it's consistent. Never goes away," he shrugs. "It's… not as loud either," Katsuki says carefully, face screwing up as he tried to explain what he meant. "The bigger ones, it's like they try to pull me, try to get my attention. Like they want me to look. But yours, I don't know if it's old or if it's just not as bad as the others, or what… but it's not as demanding. I can pretty much ignore it without trying, but it's still… *there*, I guess."

Mr. Aizawa hums, leaning back on his chair with his arms crossed. "You said the last time you touched the fog, it disappeared after the flashback?" Katsuki nodded. "But if you just look at them, they don't go away?"

"No, but I don't really try to look. Like I said I haven't really had the chance to test it all out," he said with a shrug. "Looking usually just gives me… *feelings* I guess. I get little sensations, like the smell of the tea in the room where it happened, or the pressure of a fist that formed the bruise. I don't get the full picture."

There was a long pause as the teacher's shared a look, silently discussing something Katsuki couldn't hear. (*And how no one noticed they were married was idiotic to him. Even if he hadn't been able to smell them all over each other every day, it'd be fucking obvious.)*

Finally, after too long of Katsuki twitching and shifting on the couch, Present Mic shrugged and Mr. Aizawa turned back to him.

"Alright, then we'll start small. Neither of us want to send you into an episode right away, so I want you to start with just looking," he said lowly, shifting until he was sat on the edge of his own chair, uncrossing his arms so the fog was in full view of Katsuki's red-gold eyes. "I want you to just look right now, no digging, no touching. Look at the fog and tell me exactly what it is you're feeling."

Katsuki frowned, hands clenching at his sleeves as red eyes met white. "You'll be able to tell what I'm talking about?"

The teacher shrugged. "We have an idea of what it is. Most likely it'll be the same traumatic event, as we both suffered from it. I wanted to know if the sensations and memories you get from us are the same, or if they'll differ based on the person. Plus, it'll give you practice on more people so you can get better control over this aspect of your quirk."

The blonde shifted again, anxiety and worry clinging to his gut. He couldn't smell any distress or nerves coming from either teacher, but

still… “And it’s okay? You’re sure? Because trauma is fucking traumatic for a reason,” he tried to argue. “Most people don’t want to relive it or be told about it second hand.”

Neither of them answered so Katsuki took it as the response that it was and straightened his back, taking a deep breath to prepare himself. It took more will power than he expected it to, but they were both right. He needed to learn how to use this, how to control it so it didn’t control him. He couldn’t be choking on smoke whenever he got near someone affected by a villain attack, he couldn’t be suffocating every time he kissed his boyfriend, he couldn’t *not* look at All Might just because he left a storm cloud of smoke wafting behind him everywhere he went.

He had to do this. Besides, he had permission this time.

So Katsuki looked.

Chapter End Notes

As always thank you guys so much for the love!

Just a warning for the next chapter, there will be spoilers for the MHA: Vigilante manga. I won't go into hella detail probably, but just be aware that stuff from Aizawa and Present Mic's past is going to come up and it'll be some big spoilers if you don't know what happened. For those of you who do know, I will NOT have spoilers for the newer arc in the regular comic. So don't worry about that just yet.

Drink some water and tell yourself you're awesome because you ARE!
All the love.

Chapter 13: Memories

Chapter Summary

Katsuki starts training with Aizawa and Present Mic.

(PLEASE READ THE NOTES)

Chapter Notes

PLEASE READ THIS FIRST

MAJOR Trigger warnings in this chapter as well as some spoilers:
- Character death (in the past) SPOILERS for MHA: Vigilante
- and mentions of suicide/suicide attempt (doesn't go into full detail though)
- Panic attacks

PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE take care of yourselves everyone. Feel free to skip this chapter if you need to, I'll put a summary at the end so you don't miss anything.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“What do you see?”

Katsuki frowned, letting his eyes find the fog hovering above Mr. Aizawa’s chest easily. He could feel his fox settling inside him, content and eager to finally let some of its essence out to be used. And though he’d tried so eagerly to avoid looking at someone’s trauma, it’s like he was drawn towards it for some reason. Like his fox needed to see, to *understand*.

“It’s fuzzy,” Katsuki said, because it was the only thing he could think of when he looked at it. It wasn’t as dark as Shouto’s or Shinsou’s fog was, more of a misty grey, almost see-through but not quite. The edges of it faded into the air and were… fuzzy. It was the only word that fit. “Like it’s one of those old movies, old and unfocused.”

“It happened a long time ago,” Present Mic nodded, just on the outside of Katsuki’s narrow vision. “Could explain that.”

“What else?”

Katsuki took a deep breath, as if he could breathe the fog into his

lungs despite the fact that they were aching. “My chest hurts,” he mumbled, rubbing a hand over it like that might get rid of the pain. “Like I’m suffocating, but not really. It feels like-“ he paused to think. The feeling was familiar, too familiar, but he couldn’t quite place it. Couldn’t figure out what the tight feeling on his ribs was. “Feels like a panic attack almost, but not mine.”

“Do we need to stop?”

Katsuki blinked, glancing up at his homeroom teacher with a frown. “What? Why?”

“Midoriya, you’re crying,” he said.

And that was new. Katsuki reached a hand up to brush against his cheek and sure enough it was wet. He wasn’t bawling his eyes out, but there was a steady stream of tears drifting down his cheeks that he hadn’t noticed before. But- “They aren’t mine,” he mumbled back, sure of that fact as red eyes looking up to search white ones. He thought he saw some sort of recognition in that look, but he couldn’t be sure.

A hand pressed to his knee and he turned to glance at where Present Mic was reaching across to comfort him. “Do you need a break, listener?”

But the younger blonde shook his head and scrubbed at his face with his sleeve. “We just started. I’m not a fucking baby. I’m *fine*. Besides, they aren’t even my tears. *I’m* not sad, *you* are,” he said, addressing Aizawa now, stabbing a finger in his direction. “Stop making me feel shit.” He didn’t mean it, but the words made him feel a bit better, more steady in his body, so he didn’t regret them, even when Aizawa rolled his eyes at him.

He didn’t take pity on Katsuki like Present Mic did. He simply moved on and nodded. “Now what if you dig? You mentioned you could do it before, you could see more if you focused. I want you to dig in and see if what you experience changes.”

“Sho, maybe we should give him a second-“

“No,” Katsuki interrupted. “I’m fine. I can do it.”

And do it he did.

Digging was a little harder than just looking. He wasn’t really sure

what he was supposed to be doing, but he tried to imagine he was able to touch the fog, even if he was an arm's length away. He tried to imagine the way it felt under his hands, how his claws would sink into it and pull it apart to reveal its secrets.

The more he dug, the sharper the feelings got and the darker the fog grew. Like him digging drew blood and rot to the surface. He scent made him gag and he almost closed his eyes against it, but he forced them to stay open.

Voices drifted in and out of his ears. Far away. Shouting. Screaming.

"What are they saying?"

I can't tell. It's all muffled. The rain is too loud.

"Can you see anything?"

There's blood in the back of my throat, the taste sharp and metallic in the air. Suffocating, consuming.

"Midoriya, focus. Stay with us. You're here," the steady voice said as two hands gripped at his wrists. "You're at UA in the teacher's lounge. Stay grounded. *Focus*."

Focus. Right.

He wasn't in the rain with the other heroes. He was at UA. He was just watching. Just an observer, a kid watching a movie over a decade old. A student watching the news. This wasn't him.

"There's dust on my skin," he mumbled, eyes unfocused and fingers clutching at the sleeves of whoever was holding onto him. "I think it's from the building that collapsed. I was too close- *no*… *you* were too close. There are- there are people around but I can't hear what they're saying. I can't really see them either. It's just feelings, just senses of things." He shook his head and forced himself to breathe. "The-the rain is cold. My chest hurts. *Fuck*, it feels like my heart isn't even beating anymore."

He rips his way out of Aizawa's grasp and stands, squeezing his eyes shut and struggling to focus on his breaths. "*Fuck*," he growls, turning away from them to pace the length of the couch, hands dug into his hair and tugging. The pain grounds him, but it wasn't enough. "It's not enough," he said out loud this time.

“What’s not enough?”

“I don’t *know*,” the fox snarls, snapping his teeth at the teacher before he reels himself back in. “Shit- I don’t know. It’s like the fox needs more. Like- like I need to know everything, to see everything. But I don’t want to. Not if it was like last time, not yet. I can’t- I can’t-“

The words choked in his throat and Aizawa nodded, watching as Present Mic stood and led Katsuki back to the couch. Not quite touching him, but leading and comforting.

Katsuki could feel the man’s eyes on him as he struggled to calm back down. “You don’t use this quirk often.”

“The fox?” He clarified before shaking his head. “Not really. I’ve been training with it most of my life with Auntie Hinko, but only the parts that have been around from the beginning. Mostly the transformation. The ears and tails show up when I’m emotional, but other than that I pretty much have complete control over it. I can shift in and out during fights and things with no issue. But this new shit is- well it’s fucking new, isn’t it?” He spat, scrubbing his hand through his hair. “I’m used to being able to reel it in, to keep the fox inside, but it’s gotten worse recently.”

The adults hummed, sharing another one of those secret conversation looks before Present Mic leaned forward. “Has something changed recently that would have affected your quirk?”

If you mean the fact that I have this fucking need to shove my two boyfriends against the wall and suck the life out through their mouths, then yeah.

Katsuki’s face burned and his fists clenched at the thought, eyes moving to glare at the wall to his right. He was *not* fucking ready for that conversation. Especially not with his teachers. “I don’t know, I guess,” he said instead, leaving the answer vague and useless to them. “I could sort of feel it coming on during the summer. I could like, sense these weird waves of energy coming from certain people. But it wasn’t until after the entrance exams that it really solidified into something I could see. Not until-“

He cut himself off sharply, teeth clacking as he stopped, trying to ignore the fact that his face was no doubt bright red.

“Midoriya, we can’t help if you don’t let us,” Aizawa said, his words careful but his tone tired.

And Katsuki *knew* that. He did. He just didn't want to admit it. "It was when I met Todoroki. His eye was all smoky. You can probably guess why," Katsuki shrugged. "I still didn't really see it around anyone else for a while. It kind of built up again until it was really bad around one person specifically. After the attack at the USJ I've pretty much been able to see it on everyone who's gone through something traumatic. I figure it's not just physical either. I've seen it on people who don't seem to have scars, like you and Mic. Could be emotional or mental too I guess."

Aizawa hummed and bobbed his head. "You said you see it a lot. How dark is it around your friends? Have you been able to avoid theirs or is it one of those that you can't seem to push past?"

Ha, yeah right.

Katsuki snorted and rolled his eyes. "Nice try, old man. I'm not telling you who has trauma and who doesn't." A twitch of the pro's lips told Katsuki that he *had* been trying to make the Kitsune slip, but Katsuki was smarter than that. Plus he had a lot on the line and he wasn't willing to lose it. Aizawa would have to get his info elsewhere. "Can we move on now? I'm assuming you want me to do Present Mic's too?"

"I don't think that's a great idea," the blonde hero said, waving his hands frantically and shaking his head. "You nearly had a panic attack yourself there with Sho- with Aizawa's memories. Looking into someone's trauma back to back? It can't possibly be good for your mental health."

The fox inside him prickled at that and the blonde straightened his back, glaring at the other teacher. "I'm fine. I can handle it. Besides, training gets rough sometimes. It's part of the job. I need to figure out this quirk. So you gonna let me into your head or not?"

If the hero said no again though, Katsuki wouldn't argue. He'd be upset, but he wouldn't argue. He was telling the truth earlier when he said that trauma was traumatic for a reason. He wouldn't tear up Present Mic's past if the man wasn't okay with it. Still, he also was eager to get control of this. He hated the taste of rot that surrounded him. If he could learn how to dig in just enough to get rid of the fog…

"Okay, but I'm stopping you if it get too rough," the man sighed, running a hand through his hair.

Katsuki nodded, rolling his shoulder and popping his neck before

turning to face the loud pro fully. When he managed to focus though he noticed something weird. “Huh,” he grunted, eyes narrowing at the fog in front of him. “Yours is different.”

“Different how,” Aizawa asked, curiosity evident in his voice and his eyebrows raised.

The blonde frowned, head tilting slightly as he tried to determine *what* exactly was different about it. “It’s still fuzzy, like yours but… but it’s like, muddy and mixed together. Like you’ve got two different streams crashing together in the same spot. Like two layers, but I can’t tell which one is which.”

Mic’s face twisted in confusion and Katsuki could tell he was trying to figure out what that could mean, but Aizawa was the one that spoke. “What can you see? What do you feel?”

Katsuki took a deep breath and started where he had with Aizawa. Just at the surface, just looking, just watching.

There was no rain on his face this time, no dust or rubble on his skin, but there was that pressure on his chest, the feeling of his heart stopping and starting and stopping and starting. “My chest still hurts,” he says quietly, chewing at his lip as he struggled to muddle his way through the conflicting fog in his vision. “Still feel the disgusting need to cry,” he grunted before quickly pushing that need away. “But it’s not like Aizawa’s was. There’s no smell of blood or- or shouting voices.”

“There wouldn’t be,” Mic said softly, and if Katsuki glanced away from the fog, he wondered if the man’s face would be etched with the same sadness that Katsuki could feel echoing in his own bones. “I wasn’t there for what happened, I only heard about it later.”

And that made sense. It explained why the other senses weren’t there, why Mic’s top layer was foggier than Mr. Aizawa’s, not as sharp and fresh.

“What about the second layer? You said it was mixing with something else,” Aizawa said, and Katsuki could hear the curiosity in his voice. Katsuki figured the man didn’t know what the second layer of trauma would have been, couldn’t imagine what could have been worse than whatever they both shared.

“I have to dig for that one,” the boy informed them, but he was already pushing his mind forward, his fingers grasping and pulling,

pushing aside anything that felt like a top layer and focused on the darker black underneath. “Whatever it is, it’s darker.”

The fog bellowed as Present Mic shifted in his seat. “What does that mean?”

Katsuki shrugged. “Don’t know. Could mean it was more traumatic. Could mean it’s newer maybe? I don’t fuckin’ know. I’ve only done this once before today, cut me some slack.” A sharp slap of cold rushed across his face and he shivered, teeth clenching in shock as he tried to blink away the sudden fear that lurched in his stomach. “Fuck-“

“What?”

“It’s just-“ he shivered again and shook his head. “It’s fuckin’ cold. There’s a lot of wind and it’s- I think it’s snowing?” There was something wet on his cheeks but it didn’t feel like rain or tears. It was softer, lighter. “Definitely snowing.”

That must not have been the right thing to say though because the adults both grunted in confusion. “The incident happened in the summer though. It shouldn’t be snowing,” Aizawa said.

Katsuki didn’t have an answer for him. Whatever it was he was feeling was definitely a different memory, but something linked enough with the first to feel the need to swirl around it like a hurricane. “I don’t know, but I’m not wrong. I think it’s just a different memory. Something… later, I think. Not much later, but later.” He had to clear his throat as he spoke, something lodging it’s way in between his words and he choked on a sob that wasn’t his. “My throat hurts, like- like I’ve been screaming too loud for too long. And my chest has that aching feeling again.”

The fog swirled and swirled, reached out towards him like an old enemy, pulling him towards it.

He was crying again, but he didn’t know why.

The leather around his shoulders was too tight, the sound of the wind muffled in his failing ears. His stomach was lurching with vertigo, the sobs ripping their way out of his chest like a wild animal. He was screaming again, begging, pleading.

But at who?

They were too high up. The pain from the summer was still too fresh and he couldn't- he wouldn't be able to handle it again. Not so soon. Not like this. He tried to reach out, to grab onto the shadow in front of him and pull it back from the ledge but he couldn't reach. He was going to fail. He was going to fail again and then he'd be all alone. He'd be the only one left and then what? Then what would he do?

"Midoriya-"

He couldn't lose anyone else. Not like this. Never like this.

"Midoriya stop!"

The dull pain of a hand gripping around his wrist drew the blonde back into his body. He blinked, realizing his hand was reached out towards Present Mic, hovering so just his fingers were touching the fog. Present Mic's yellow eyes were wide and glossy and Katsuki couldn't help but realize he'd been saying all of that out loud.

He hadn't even known he'd been reaching out.

"Midoriya?"

He yanked away from them with a loud gasp of air, muscles coiled and body tensed as he tried to ground himself back onto the couch where he knew he'd been the whole time.

Not on top of a building. Not somewhere the wind could easily blow him off. Not screaming out to his-

"Sorry," he grumbled, but the word sounded empty on his tongue. His chest still ached and he was struggling to breathe, but Present Mic looked almost worse than he was. The man looked wrecked. Like he'd seen the ghost of someone he'd never wanted to see again. Katsuki couldn't help but feel like it was his fault. "Sorry. I- *fuck*- I told you this was a bad idea. You didn't know there was a second memory. I shouldn't have- I didn't mean to-"

His nails dug into his palms as he stood on shaky feet. His legs felt like jelly and his stomach churned with the need to vomit.

He hadn't touched the fog enough to have seen the full picture, but he knew what it was. Or he knew enough-

Someone was going to jump.

“I have to go,” he growled, ignoring whatever his teachers called after him. There were footsteps behind him but they grew distant. Too far away.

He couldn’t stay there in that room. There was rot between his teeth and it felt like he was decaying from the inside out. He needed to transform, needed to feel the wind against his fur and feel the ground beneath his claws. He needed Izuku and Shouto and the pack. He needed- *fuck*- he didn’t know what he needed but he knew he needed it.

When he finally made it to the labs, his vision was blurry and his orange and black ears were pressed tight to the back of his head. His backpack was too heavy on his shoulders and his skin ached with the need to be released.

Shouto and Izuku were still there when he burst in, the two of them shoving away from each other instantly.

Their faces were bright red, lips kiss swollen, and Shouto’s shirt was wrinkled where Izuku had been grabbing onto it. They both stared at him with wide eyes, still getting over the shock of thinking they’d been caught. Izuku recovered first, his face twisting up in something pained and worried as he stepped forward, hands hovering in the air like he was approaching a wild animal.

“Kaachan? Have you been crying?”

Shouto was staring at him with that same blank expression he’d been leveling the fox with for the past week and it *hurt*. Even more now that he’d seen him on the roof-

No… it wasn’t him.

“I should be going,” the dual-haired boy said softly - *or was his hair black now* - turning towards Izuku with a soft smile. “I’ll see you tomorrow Izuku, Katsuki.” He tried to step around the blonde only for the boy to reach out towards him, his red eyes almost glowing with golden flecks, almost like-

“You’re okay,” Katsuki breathed, though in the back of his mind he knew the words weren’t his. Hands that weren’t his reached out to frame the other boy’s face, fingers too tight against too pale skin. There was concern in those usually dead – *tired* – eyes and the boy frowned. “You’re okay. You’re okay.” Why couldn’t he say anything else?

“Katsuki? What is it? What’s happened?”

“Don’t leave me again,” the blonde begged, pulling the other boy into a too-tight hug and digging his face into his shoulder. His chest was pounding, which didn’t make sense because his heart was in his throat. They were still too high up. Still in too much danger of toppling over the edge. *No… we’re inside. We’re inside now.* “I can’t do it- I can’t lose you too. Not so soon after we lost-“ *Who had they lost? Why couldn’t he think of the name?*

Hesitant arms wrapped over his shoulders and tugged him close. There was the pounding of feet in the hallway behind him. Someone was crying.

A kiss was pressed to his hair. “I’m not leaving you, Katsuki. I’m right here. I’m not going anywhere.”

“Hey little Listener, mind stayin’ after class for a moment?”

Hizashi smiled brightly at the young blonde as he paused in the front of the classroom door. The boy stared at him for a moment before sighing and waving his group of friends off, muttering something about meeting them in the café.

Once the door had shut, the pro waved to one of the front desks and smirked as Katsuki hopped onto the table, crossing his arms and glaring. It was clear the boy knew what this was about, but Hizashi didn’t let the attitude bother him as he circled his own desk and leaned against it, taking the moment to gather his own thoughts before speaking.

“I think perhaps you deserve an explanation for what happened yesterday,” he said with a gentle smile.

Katsuki rolled his eyes and huffed. “I don’t need shit,” he grumbled. “I told you it was gonna be a bad idea, but you two idiots wanted to do it anyway. Don’t worry, I learned my lesson, I’ll just go back to ignoring the smoke.”

But Hizashi clucked his tongue and frowned. That didn’t sit well with him, just *ignoring* a quirk, especially one that painful. Katsuki was a tricky creature however, he’d have to be careful confronting anything like this without setting the boy off. So he hummed and bobbed his head. “Lemme put forth a situation for you then. Think of it as a mind game, yeah? A puzzle, if you will. You’re a hero, a pro, and you’re on

a job."

"What kind of job?" Katsuki frowned, eyes narrowed in suspicion, like he knew where this was going but was willing to play it out.

"Let's say rescue," Hizashi shrugged. "A young girl, six years old, was kidnapped and tortured. You're mounting a rescue after a long, grueling investigation into finding her so by now you're emotionally invested," he continued, knowing more details would get the boy interested. Shouta always said the eldest Midoriya had incredible strategy skills and was great at improvising in an emergency if needed. No doubt he was already trying to build himself a plan in his head. "You have a small team with you, but you've all split up to cover more ground since you don't know exactly where the girl is in the building. You find her, a fight breaks out between you and whoever is holding her captive. What do you do?"

The boy's face twists up in confusion for moment, like the answer is obvious, before he shrugs and smirks. "Kill the bastard and get the girl out." Hizashi raises an eyebrow and Katsuki rolls his eyes. "And by *kill*, I mean *arrest*."

"Okay," the older hero nods. "But you look at the girl and all you can see is fog."

Katsuki tenses at the reminder of what they were talking about, realization settling on his young features and Hizashi knows he's got him. "The girl's six years old, has been missing for weeks, and was probably tortured the entire time. She's no doubt incredibly traumatized by it. And let's say for the sake of the scenario that she's injured right now. You have to get her out as fast as possible so she survives." The boy's fists clench around the table. "If you touch her, you get flashbacks. When you get flashbacks, you get stuck," he supplies carefully. "How do you expect to get her out to the ambulance if you can't fight back the fog?"

"What are you saying?"

Hizashi grinned, clapping his hands together excitedly and dutifully ignoring the way the boy jumped at the sound. "I'm SO glad you asked! I want you to keep training with Shouta and I. We still need to figure out how to temper your reactions and now you know what to expect so it should be easier. It might be beneficial for you to practice on others you know who are comfortable with it, BUT that's a topic for another matter. My point is, we need to get you to a point where

you can either ignore the fog completely and not get stuck, or you can fight past it and save that hypothetical little girl!"

There was a long silence after that as the boy stared at him, brows tugged together and fingers clenching and unclenching around the table. "You- you were about to break down too," Katsuki accused, jaw clenching tight as he struggled with his words. "I saw it. Whatever I was bringing up was- it fucking *hurt*. You can't tell me I didn't. Why the fuck would you want me to keep doing it?"

Ah, so that's what this was about.

Sighing, Hizashi pushed himself up until he was sat on his own desk, leaning his elbows onto his knees and facing the boy with a smile, albeit a sad one. "What you were seeing, little listener, was something I hadn't thought you'd be able to see. When Shouta and I agreed to let you dig into our… fog, as you would say, we thought it was about the same event. We hadn't realized that you'd get other things associated with it."

And yes, hearing his own words echoed back at him the day before, seeing his own terror on another boy's face, was devastating. It was painful and heart-wrenching, that someone else was *literally* going through the exact same thing he had. Hizashi wouldn't dare push the boy to experience it again if he didn't want to. However, what he'd said before was right too. The boy couldn't become the hero he so desperately wanted to be if he couldn't push past this barrier that stood in his way. If bringing up his old memories helped this young student be the best hero out there, then he could suffer to relive his trauma a little. Besides, it might still hurt, but he and Shouta had been to enough therapy that he had dealt with the worst of it already.

(Though they may both need to call their therapist for a touch up meeting after this, just in case.)

"I spoke with Shouta," Hizashi told the boy. "And we both agree that it might be easier on you next time if you know exactly what it is you're digging into."

Red eyes snapped up to his and Hizashi could see the surprise and the hesitation in them.

"You were blindsided by my memories when you shouldn't have been. It was a little stupid of us to not think of that beforehand. So," he shrugged, spreading his hands out in front of him with a grim smile. "I want to tell you what happened that year. That way, when you're

digging, you know exactly what it is you're digging for. Hopefully it will help you control your reactions more."

"You don't have to-"

"I do," Hizashi interrupted with a nod. "We are your teachers, young listener! It's our job to help you with your quirks, to help you become the best heroes you can be. This is how we do it."

And so Hizashi told him.

He told him about his two best friends through high school who morphed into something more, something better. He told them how much time they spent together, about the hero agency they said they'd open together when they graduated, about the hours and hours they spent training and practicing and just… being together. And then he told him about their work studies. About how Hizashi had gone off to his, and Shouta and Oboro to theirs. He told him about the day Shouta came home and the day Oboro didn't.

He still remembered the pain in his chest at the news. Still remembered how unfair it felt because they were just *kids*. They were just students, not even graduated yet, and already the life of a hero had stolen one of them away. He remembered thinking that as much as it hurt, he had to push it aside, he had to be stronger because Shouta was falling apart in front of him and he didn't have time to mourn for himself. He still had one partner left, one partner who had been there to see the death of another, and he needed to be there for him.

It had been the first worst day of his life.

And then, with a deep breath, he told Katsuki about the second worst day of his life. Told him about the day he'd gone to the roof they always ate lunch at to find Shouta standing on the edge of it, a dead sort of look in his eyes and his capture cloth tossed on the ground behind him. He told him about the screams that ripped their way out of his throat, not loud enough and so incredibly raw that it hurt to breathe for days after. He told him how he begged and pleaded, how he tore his heart out and offered it up on a silver platter to keep from losing the only other person he'd had in his life that he cared about. He told him the words he'd offered the other man, swearing that if he went down, they were going down together because Hizashi wasn't going to live through another heartbreak. He couldn't.

And he told him about the way his hands wouldn't let go of Shouta's

for hours and days and months later for the fear that he wouldn't come back.

By the end of his story, the room was silent. There was very little expression on the other boy's face, like he was trying to figure out how exactly he was supposed to feel about everything he heard.

"I won't make you train if you don't want to," the pro said quietly, honestly. "What Shouta and I went through was awful and I would never wish it on another person. But, if you want to keep going and training, you have our permission, if you needed it. And if you'd like it to just be Shouta and not me, that's fine too."

The blonde still didn't answer and Hizashi held back a sigh as he pushed himself to his feet. He dropped his hand gently on the boy's head and ruffled his hair with a smile.

"You're going to be the number one hero one day, little listener. How you get there is completely up to you.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter was HARD to write. Sorry for all the angst guys! I'll be adding some fluff soon to even it out, don't worry!

For those of you who chose to skip this chapter, here is a brief summary of what happened:
Katsuki goes to his first training session with Aizawa and Present Mic in order to try and learn control over how to use/avoid the fog he's been seeing. The three of them discuss what Katsuki's power is and how it works. They want him to start small and only look at the fog and try to dig into it without touching it. He starts off with exploring Aizawa's fog where he gets brief snipits of the day Oboro died, then he digs deeper and is able to feel how Aizawa felt that day. He then moves onto Present Mic only to realize that the louder teacher's fog is in the same spot, but looks different because he has two different traumatic memories that are connected, so they're mixing together. The first is when Aizawa came back to tell him that Oboro was dead. The second one was the day that Aizawa attempted suicide off the roof of one of the school buildings before Present Mic stopped him. Katsuki finds himself reaching out and touching the fog memory without realizing it and it sends him halfway into an episode where he can't really figure out what's real and what isn't. He runs away to find Izuku and Shouto in the labs. Shouto says he can leave

(because they're still sort of awkward fighting), but Katsuki is in the middle of an attack and doesn't realize that Shouto *isn't* Aizawa. He begs him to stay and Shouto promises he will in order to calm him down. The next day, Present Mic asks Katsuki to stay back in class to explain things to him and ask that he continue his training so he can learn better control. Katsuki argues, then Present Mic explains to him exactly what happened those two days in the memories he saw in the hopes that training will be easier since he knows what exactly he's looking for. Chapter ends.

As a side note: If you haven't read Vigilante, this chapter has spoilers for Oboro, but the suicide thing was NOT canon. That wasn't in the manga, don't worry. (Don't want to confuse people.)

Please take care of yourselves my darlings! Drink water, eat food, live for something because you're loved out there! I promise you are!

I also promise fluff to save us from this angst.

Chapter 14: Dashing

Chapter Summary

> Shouto is flustered. Izuku wins a game. And Katsuki was *over on the bench*.
> (Look up the John Mulaney skit if you don't get THAT reference lol)

Chapter Notes

> Whew, got this chapter out later than I wanted, but here it is!
> I promised fluff, and I have delivered with a little extra surprise at the end.
> Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Things between Katsuki and Shouto were better.

Neither of them were happy with the situation, and while Katsuki didn't *necessarily* apologize, he acted sorry and had promised not to tell anyone about what he *thought* was happening in Shouto's home life. Which was a relief. Not that he was wrong, but still, Shouto didn't want people knowing. Not yet at least. Not until he could prove to his overheated bastard of a father that he was better than him, that he was better than his fire.

Besides, the sports festival was coming up and the entire class seemed eager and the happiness that seeped out of everyone was practically contagious. Even Shouto found himself smiling more, laughing more – if you could call the little huffs and chuckles laughing. Izuku and Katsuki did, so he supposed it was good enough.

"Shouchaan! Train with me!"

The dual-haired student frowned, turning his gaze towards Izuku who was still laid out on the ground from his sparring with Katsuki, huffing and puffing as he struggled to catch his breath. The blonde stood over him with a triumphant smirk, but made no move to help him stand.

Shouto, who had been off to the side of the gym studying on the bench and occasionally watching the two boys, tilted his head and hummed. "You already look very tired, Izuku."

The greenette pouted, grunting as he rolled over and reached out towards Shouto like a put out cat. “Oh come on, Shouchaan! You *never* spar with me.”

The pout almost did him in, but Shouto stood his ground and shook his head. “And for good reason. I was trained by my father from a very young age in hand to hand combat. Fighting against me simply wouldn’t be fair, and me holding back on you wouldn’t be fair either. Katsuki is closer to your level of experience, so I find it best that I sit out of these particular training exercises.”

“*Oi*,” Katsuki spat, lowering his water bottle from his mouth to sneer at Shouto. And *oh* how pretty he looked when he was mad. “You wanna go, pretty boy? I’m sure my *experience* can go up against yours any day!”

Sighing, Shouto shook his head and set his book aside, knowing he wasn’t going to get any work done now that Katsuki had been goaded. “That would be a terrible idea. Eventually you’ll get upset that I’m beating you and you’ll start to use your quirk, which will lead to me using mine, and I would much rather wait to beat you when we get to the sports festival. And besides, I don’t want to get in trouble for using our quirks after school hours without permission.”

Katsuki scoffed and looked like he was about to say something, but was interrupted as Izuku stood. “But *Shouchaan*,” he cooed, the sound all but vibrating in Shouto’s bones and he found his spine straightening immediately. Like he was ready for some challenge or threat that he didn’t know was coming. He watched with narrowed eyes as Izuku walked towards him slowly, only stopping when he was close enough to crawl into Shouto’s lap and straddle him.

“Izuku,” Shouto grumbled quietly, hands immediately coming up to grab the boy’s waist. Izuku pouted at him – and yes, that did things to his patience – and leaned forward, until his lips were just a breath away. “Being cute will not get you what you want,” he lied.

It would. It absolutely would.

“It would make me *really* happy if you sparred with me,” he tried again, his lips brushing against Shouto’s as he spoke and the other boy tightened his grip on Izuku’s hips. “Plus, I know Kaachan would like to see it. You know,” Izuku said lowly, reaching his arms up to rest on Shouto’s shoulders and running one of his hands through dual coloured hair, “He used to get all flustered when we watched All

Might's early fight reels. Back when he was still starting out on the hero scene."

"Oh my fuck- don't *tell him that!"* The blonde behind him squawked and sputtered at the accusation, but Shouto paid him little mind.

Shouto hummed, leaning forward to drop a short kiss onto the plump lips before him. *I'm so weak.* He wondered if Katsuki would be disappointed in how easily he is willing to give up just because Izuku whispered pretty words at him and fluttered those long eyelashes. Then again, he was sure Katsuki would have given in just as easily. "Very well. One spar, but then we go out for dinner."

Izuku blinked at that, head tilting in that adorable way that sent his curls fluttering around his face. "Dinner?"

"We haven't had a proper date yet," he clarified as he stood, edging Izuku off his lap and trying to ignore the sudden nerves in his stomach at the surprised look on the other two's faces. "That… is something people do, isn't it? When they are boyfriends? They go on dates? The internet said dinner is usually the first date of choice, and I have my dad's credit card, so we can go anywhere you want. Or nowhere, if you don't want to. That is fine as well, and-"

Rough lips pressed against his to shut him up, and Shouto grunted in surprise before returning Katsuki's kiss. The blonde had grabbed at Shouto's hips to pull him close enough to kiss, squeezing Izuku between the two of their chests, though the shorter of the three didn't look like he was complaining.

"What was that for?"

He was met with a sharp grin when Katsuki pulled away, a laugh light on his tongue. "You looked up how to date on the internet?"

This time it was Shouto who pouted as he watched the explosive blonde turn and drop himself heavily on the bench. "I have never dated before. Or been in the situation where I thought I ever would," he explained with a shrug. "All I know of romance comes from the dramas my sister watches and-" he grimaces at the thought before shaking his head. "I do hope that's not how it actually is in real life."

"I think dinner would be nice," Izuku said quickly before Katsuki could laugh again. "One spar, then we go out."

Though Shouto shouldn't have been surprised, Izuku actually held his

own fairly well. What he lacked in actual hand-to-hand knowledge, he made up for in strategy, in observation. He spent most of the fight in defense, blocking and dodging and avoiding. But always, *always*, watching. He got that look in his eyes that he got when he was analyzing the class, or when he was elbow deep in some sort of mechanical contraption, oil spread across his skin like honey. And the way he moved was practiced. Shouto had seen it plenty of times when the boy sparred with Katsuki, but he'd simply thought it had to do with their familiarity, the fact that they knew how each other fought by now. But it wasn't that.

The way Izuku fought was like a dance. His feet moved in graceful and complex motions, his body twisting in ways that sent Shouto reeling every time the green-haired boy dodged an attack. And for All Might's sake, the boy was *fast*.

He was smaller than Shouto and Katsuki, so it made sense, but it's like he didn't know the meaning of the word hesitation. Like he wasn't thinking about his moves before doing them even though Shouto *knew* he was thinking at least three steps ahead during the entire fight.

It was both different and similar to the way Katsuki fought.

Shouto and Katsuki sparred every once in a while, when they were bored or antsy, or when they were partnered up in class. Katsuki held the same notion in his head that there was no such thing as hesitation. The difference was, where Izuku didn't hesitate because he couldn't afford to, Katsuki didn't hesitate because he was confident in every single decision he made. He fought with his entire body, relying on strength more than speed, but that didn't mean he wasn't well versed in moving.

In fact Shouto loved watching Katsuki and Izuku spar when he could. They matched out very well with the smooth way Izuku moved and the chaotic, but precise way Katsuki did.

It might seem silly, the way Katsuki brought out all these fancy moves- like flips in the air or dropping to slide across the floor- but it was clear he didn't do them just for show. He knew what he was doing.

Izuku too, clearly knew what he was doing. He might not have had the same training as Shouto, but his analytical mind no doubt gave him an advantage as he watched for faints and shifting muscles and

patterns. While it was difficult for him to land a hit on Shouto or take him down at all, he was excellent at dodging attacks. The taller boy had no doubt that if Izuku was going up against anyone else, he'd be able to work them until they were exhausted and use that to his advantage.

Unfortunately for him, Shouto was well versed in working himself past his breaking point. His father had made sure of that.

"That was fuckin' hot," Katsuki said once Shouto had finally managed to get a leg under Izuku, twisting the boy until they both collapsed onto the ground, Shouto on top and pressing Izuku face first into the mat. "Shit, is that what it looks like when Izu and I fight? Because *damn*, I bet we look fantastic."

Shouto couldn't help the snort that escaped him as he rolled his eyes up to the boy on the bench. "Are you saying I'm not fantastic, Katsuki?"

He let the name purr out of his lips and he could see the blonde shiver from across the room, cursing quietly under his breath.

The body under him shifted and he glanced down to see Izuku grimacing slightly, trying to twist his arm out of Shouto's tight grip. "Shouchaan, you're gonna leave bruises!"

"Then yield," the boy responded, uncaring about the whines since technically the fight wasn't over.

Izuku only pouted, twisting his wrists again as a breath hitched in his throat. Shouto frowned, leaning over slightly to get a better look at the boy's face, worried that maybe he was actually hurting him but-

Izuku's face was flushed, his freckles standing out against the dark red of his plump cheeks and his eyes hooded and glassy. He shifted again underneath Shouto, the movement pressing them up against each other and sending a shock of arousal through the dual-haired boy. He couldn't help the gasp that escaped his lips, nor could he ignore the one he heard from the bench where Katsuki was watching with rapt attention.

"Izuku," Shouto breathed through his clenched teeth and into the boy's ear as he struggled to keep himself in control. The name was a warning as much as it was a plea, but the greenette only whined again, pushing his ass up into Shouto's pelvis and letting out a heavy breath at the hardness he was met with.

He turned his head enough to shoot Shouto a wide eyed pout, “Kiss me?”

And how was he supposed to say no?

The angle was a little awkward, since Shouto was still perched over Izuku’s back, but it didn’t make the kiss any less fantastic. There was a taste of sweat on the smaller boy’s lips and he seemed almost hungry as he pressed up into the kiss. Shouto couldn’t help but press back, hands loosening and shifting until they were pressed against Izuku’s twisting hips-

In the blink of an eye the world spun around him and he hit the mat with a surprised grunt, blinking away the dots in his vision to see Izuku on top of him, straddling his waist with a triumphant grin and holding Shouto’s hands down with a deceptively strong grip. Katsuki was cackling madly in the background, but that smile on Izuku’s face made it hard for Shouto to feel put out. So instead he huffed, a gentle, proud smile on his lips as he gazed up at his boyfriend.

“That was very underhanded, Izuku.”

“But it worked,” was the response he received, along with a quick peck to the lips. “Do you yield?”

Shouto had half the mind to continue this little game of theirs, interested in playing by these new rules Izuku had put forth. But he was hungry, and tired, and Izuku looked so happy to have gotten the upper hand in their spar, so he figured it was best to leave it at that. “I yield.”

Katsuki was waiting for them at the door to the locker rooms when they’d finally stood and gathered all their things. Though they had barely made it out of the building before Katsuki had Izuku shoved up against the back of the building, his mouth slamming into Izuku’s like waves against the Cliffside. Shouto watched in amusement and interest, knowing what Katsuki meant when he said they were hot.

“The sports festival.”

Izuku made a low, questioning sound in his throat when Katsuki pulled away to speak, and Shouto raised an eyebrow. “The sports festival,” the blonde repeated, as if it answered the question. “The three of us are gonna win it.”

Ah. “Katsuki, there is only one winner-“

“No,” he argued, slinging an arm over Izuku’s shoulder as if he hadn’t just devoured him behind the school gym, and leading them towards the school gates. “There are three places. I’m gonna get first, *obviously*, and you two are gonna be up there with me because no one else in this damn school is better than the two of you.”

Something hard thumped in Shouto’s chest and he wondered if his own face was as bright red as Izuku’s was. Shouto still hadn’t completely forgiven Katsuki for their fight, and the other boy would completely avoid him on days after training with his father, but they were making it work. Shouto found it hard to not forgive the boy when he was being so sweet. Or… as sweet as he could be in that brash, stubborn way of his.

Izuku rolled his eyes and bumped his head up against Katsuki’s. “Kaachan, that isn’t very nice to the others. There are probably plenty of students who hold a really good chance, especially against me.”

And Shouto didn’t like *that*. The way the quirkless boy put himself down like that sometimes, in his own gentle way. The way he’s so casual about his own insecurities no matter how *hard* he tries to prove them wrong. Shouto *hated* it. So he brushed his fingers against Izuku’s as they walked, something they’d started doing to show their affections in public without it being obvious, and said, “that’s not true. You are very formidable in hand to hand combat and your support items have even the third years talking about them. You are very impressive, Izuku. Please don’t sell yourself short.”

“I think what IcyHot here means to say,” Katsuki barged in, tightening his arm around Izuku’s shoulders and rubbing the boy’s messy curls with his opposite hand, “is that you’re a badass and if you don’t make it to the finals then neither of us will speak to you ever again. We can’t date a loser.”

“Katsuki,” Shouto scolded, pinching the boy’s arm. “That is *not* what I said.”

But Izuku was laughing, because it was just Katsuki being Katsuki, and Shouto couldn’t help but melt at the sound of the boy’s laughter, especially when Katsuki’s joined in.

Look how weak you’ve become for them, he thought to himself as oil stained hands brushed against his and caramel scented fingers tugged at his hair to gain his attention again. *Look how weak you’re willing to be for them.*

“You ever thought of getting an undercut, bunny?”

Izuku hummed from where he was laying across Katsuki’s chest, lifting his head to rest his chin on his shoulder. “Hm? Bunny?”

Katsuki shrugged with the opposite shoulder, fingers tugging through green curls lazily and spread out on the couch after Momma Inko had left to take Shouto home. They had managed to go out to dinner, some expensive ramen that they were way too underdressed for, but the lady at the door knew Shouto by name and didn’t seem to mind, which still baffled them.

And dinner had been nice. They were too loud and too excited, and Katsuki was honestly surprised that they hadn’t been kicked out halfway through, but it was nice. Domestic even. It was a nice break from the chaos of school and arguing and training and- and Endeavor. Katsuki was holding to his promise of not telling anyone what he knew, but it didn’t mean he had to like it. (Instead, he’d set his sights on Shinsou in the hopes of digging further into what he was hiding. Because Shinsou hadn’t made him promise shit, and if he was being hurt at home too, then Katsuki was damn well going to do something about it.)

“You’re like a bunny,” he clarified with a smirk. “Hyper, hard to focus, fuckin’ adorable. Plus I’m pretty sure foxes eat rabbits so,” he shrugged again and waggled his eyebrows suggestively, a loud laugh booming from his chest as Izuku blushed. “You didn’t answer my question.”

Big green eyes peeked out from where the younger boy had dug his face into Katsuki’s shoulder and the blonde could see the pout in his eyes. “I forgot.”

“And undercut,” he repeated with a tug on a curl. “I think it’d look hot.”

Izuku hummed, tilting his head to rest against Katsuki’s peck. “I’ve never thought about it. Everyone’s always liked my curls, never thought to cut them off.”

“Not all of them, dumbass,” the blonde snorted. “Just the sides and the back. Could taper it on the back into a V. Have something new and fuckin’ badass for the sports festival next week.”

“That could be cool!” He responded, face lighting up in excitement. “What about you? I think you’d look good with one too! But with it

shaved all the way around. It'd make your spikes look awesome." Which, point of fact, Katsuki's spikes *always* looked awesome. But he wouldn't mind looking even *more* awesome, so he shrugged in agreement, smirking when the boy on top of him lit up in excitement. "Let's do it now!"

Which was not what the fox had been expecting and he laughed again. "What? Fuckin' now? Nowhere is open, you dumbass. It's like nine o'clock at night."

"Kaachan," Izuku said very seriously, sitting up and leveling him with a stare that had no right looking as hot as it did. "We're going to hero school, you can make explosions with your hands, and I literally deal with dangerous tools on an hourly basis. I think we can handle shaving our heads."

Which, you know, when he put it like that, Katsuki had no way of arguing with.

So a few minutes later found both boys in the bathroom, Izuku perched on the sink and facing the mirror and Katsuki behind him with an electric razor they'd found in a drawer.

"Smile Kaachan!"

The blonde scowled from where he was in the mirror and stuck his tongue out, but Izu only giggled before sending off the picture. By the vibration in his pocket, he assumed it was to their group chat with Shouto. "What'd you say, nerd? Let me see!"

Izu-Izu 21:34

Image.png

Shou! Tell us this is a bad idea!

Katsuki snorted at the message and rolled his eyes. The electric razor was very clearly seen in the image where Katsuki was plugging it in and glaring at the camera. He fiddled with the guards on the tool, measuring it up against Izuku's hair to gauge the length as they waited for a reply.

Shou-Cat 21:36

Your mother says if she comes home to either one of you bald, that you're both disowned. I am inclined to agree with her, however I do not wish to leave her lonely with no children. Please do not go bald.

Shou-Cat 21:36

Update, your mother has agreed to adopt me in your stead. She makes very good soba and I love her. Do as you please.

Izu-Izu 21:37

*Shouuuu that's so mean! You love us! And we won't be * **bald** *. It'll look great, I promise!*

Shou-Cat 21:38

I will believe that when I see it. Be still when Katsuki is that close to you with a weapon. I'd hate to see your ear cut off.

"Fuckin' rude," Katsuki spat, but there was little heat behind it as he sidled up behind Izuku. He spent the next ten or so minutes separating and pinning Izuku's curls back so the top portion and part of the back was out of the way. For his credit, Izuku was fairly patient as Katsuki worked, only shifting and jittering around when Katsuki was digging for more bobbie pins. "Moment of truth," the blonde grinned once he was finally ready, holding up the razor and waggling his eyebrows. "Last chance to back out."

"Not a chance. Let's do it!"

By the time Momma Inko got home, the bathroom was covered in green and blonde hair and both boys were sporting newly shaved undercuts. Since neither of them were comfortable attempting to trim the tops of their heads, the curls and spikes hung over a bit on the sides in a messy way, but beside that, Katsuki was pretty proud of how

awesome they looked.

Nonetheless, Momma Inko still sat them down individually with a pair of scissors and trimmed up the rest of their hair for them, complimenting them both on how well they'd done considering they had no idea what they were doing. When she was done, they took plenty of photos- so much in fact that the last handful were mostly blurry because Katsuki was tired of posing and had tried to go after the phone. Each and every one of them ended up in the group chat for Shouto.

Shou-Cat 22:45

I do have to admit they look very attractive on you both. It's unfortunate that you'll both be staying though. I was looking forward to free soba.

Izu-Izu 22:46

Shou! You know you can come over anytime and mom will cook you soba! You're practically adopted anyway.

Boom-Boom 22:46

And stfu bitch you know you love us. You'd cry if we left.

Shou-Cat 22:49

You give yourself too much credit, Katsuki. But I am fond of you both and you both look very dashing.

Izu-Izu 22:51

*Oh my gosh Kaachan we look * **DASHING** **

Boom-Boom 22:52

Image.png

Shou-Cat 22:53

His face is so red! Izuku, if I'd have known complimenting you like that would fluster you, I'd have started a long time ago.

Boom-Boom 22:54

Bitch is red as a tomato right now. I called him bunny earlier and he couldn't even look at me.

Shou-Cat 22:55

So pet names are an effective tactic against him. Good to know.

Izu-Izu 22:59

You guys are so mean!!! I am weak!!!

Shou-Cat 23:10

Is this a matching thing? Do I need to shave my hair off as well?

Boom-Boom 23:12

Do you want to?

Shou-Cat 23:15

Not necessarily. I was actually thinking of growing it out. The girls seem to think I would look good with long hair. I don't think I'd grow it too long, but I was thinking about shoulder length. Momo assured me I would look good in a messy bun.

Shou-Cat 23:27

…

Do you disagree?

Izu-Izu 23:28

Sorry Shouchaan! Kaachan got a little… flustered.

Shou-Cat 23:29

Flustered? What for?

Izu-Izu 23:32

*Apparently the idea of you with long hair is a * **thing** * for him that he didn't know he had. If you thought I was red before, you should see him now.*

Izu-Izu 23:32

Actually, here

Image.png

Shou-Cat 23:35

I have so many questions. First, is that shade of red healthy on a human being? Second, why do his fox ears look so good with that haircut? That seems unfair. Third, is that a three foot tall All Might plushie he's hugging?

Boom-Boom 23:37

I hate you all. I'm going to bed.

Izu-Izu 23:38

It's past his bedtime. By a lot LOL Goodnight Shouchaan! We'll see you on Monday?

Shou-Cat 23:39

You will. Goodnight Izuku.

Goodnight Katsuki.

The bell above the door rang loudly throughout the small shop, tinkling in the air and mixing with the sounds of a fountain hidden somewhere in the clutter. The incense was sharp in the air, almost painful to the nose. The fresh wards etched around the wood floors, no doubt hidden under bookshelves and counters, pressed uncomfortably against his skin. A warning to those who entered.

A threat to those with ill intent.

An old woman sat at the counter, her skin wrinkled and eyes foggy, but there was no doubt she was looking right at him as he entered.

"Well, I must say," she began once he'd reached the counter, her voice ancient and crackled, like broken stone under heavy boots, "I was expecting visitors eventually, though never one of your kind. I suppose I should have known better. Satori are always known for flocking towards Kitsune. You though, you're something special, aren't you? Not quite Satori, not quite human either. Tell me, is there a clan you belong to?"

He shook his head before bowing politely to the woman. "I have a pack, but no clan," he said quietly, assuming there was no one else in the store considering her ease at bringing the topic up. "My kitsune, I believe him to be your charge. I've come to introduce myself to you, as I... believe is custom, priestess."

The priestess hummed and bobbed her head. "You do not know much of your customs, do you boy?"

He shook his head, folding his hands politely behind his back. "My gran was a priestess, like you. She taught me what she could, but died when I was very young. There's a lot I don't know, but I do know the basics," he promised. "My kind serve the kitsune clans- serve as protectors, informants, even friends. I didn't know it until recently but I think that's why she brought me here to Mustafu, because she knew there was a kitsune here that was alone. I don't know much, but I know that it's dangerous for him to be on his own out here. Especially considering he's like me. I'm surprised he's lived this long," the boy told her honestly. "My gran said we don't tend to live past childhood."

"You don't," the priestess confirmed with a solemn nod. "He had special circumstances surrounding his birth and his life. He had me to protect him, just as you had your gran to protect you. We priestesses may not be as powerful as you spirits, but we have our uses." With a hobbled step that he wasn't quite sure was for show or not, the woman slipped around the counter and made her way to lock the front door, turning the OPEN sign around to CLOSED. Then she gestured towards the door behind her counter and gave him a smile. The kind of smile that told him she knew things he didn't, and that she most likely wouldn't tell him everything. "Why don't we get more comfortable? I'd like to know your intentions with my ward, and I'm sure you'd like to know more about the expectations that come with your heritage."

He nodded, following her back into a large living area with a kotatsu in the center of it and a pot of tea.

"Oh, my manners! I've nearly forgotten them in my old age. You may call me Auntie Hinko, everyone does," she said, smiling sweetly at him as he held out an arm to help her onto her cushion. "And you? What name were you given, little Satori?"

Once again, he bowed at the waist, purple hair fluttering around him and tired eyes fixated on the bamboo flooring. "Shinsou Hitoshi, priestess. It's an honor to meet you."

Chapter End Notes

Hope everyone liked this fluff chapter!
Don't worry, Operation: Stop the Divorce is still happening since the boy's haven't *completely* made up yet. You'll see what I mean in a few chapters. As for this chapter, I am a hard core simp for undercut Midoriya and Bakugou, so have a little of that. And I simp so hard for long haired Todoroki. So enjoy my simping. Join me.

Also hoped you guys liked that little teaser at the end. I know you've all been asking and wondering so I threw in a little plot stuff at the end of our fluff. Yeet.

Love you all so much! Drink water! Take care of yourself! Eat a snack!

Chapter 15: Pork Cutlet

Chapter Summary

In which we get a cooking episode.

Chapter Notes

Sorry it's been a hot second everyone! Had a rough weekend and it's been busy at work so this chapter is a little late! Anyway, we're still settled on some fluff. I low key hate this chapter but I wanted to get it done and move on because I'm excited about the sports festival. Hope it's okay!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The week leading up to the sports festival was both incredibly stressful for all involved, and at the same time entirely uneventful. Izuku had barely managed to leave the labs at all during the week, only seeing Shouto when the older boy would stop by to drop off his lunch, and seeing Katsuki whenever they weren't in school- though even then it was rare that Izuku left the garage that mom had let him set up as a shop. Katsuki and Shouto meanwhile spent most of their time- like the rest of their class- training and sparring, sometimes with each other, sometimes with other members of the so called pack.

Still, with them all being so busy, a much needed break was always in order, and it found its way into their schedules via one Midoriya Inko who suggested having their friends over for a de-stress barbeque halfway through the week. Katsuki attempted to argue, saying he didn't need so many extras in his house, but it had so far been the only thing to convince Izuku out of his damn garage for a night and he was reluctant to admit he missed the little rabbit. So with just enough of a fight not to be suspicious, he eventually gave in, mumbling something about Momma Inko not being prepared enough for their group of idiots.

And before long, Wednesday evening came with a gaggle of brightly coloured teenagers filing out of the nearby train and heading towards the Midoriya household.

Every member of the pack was there, and they'd all stopped in the locker rooms after class to change out of their school uniforms, and Katsuki couldn't help but enjoy how utterly domestic and… *full* it felt.

Having them all around him, chatting and nagging in his ear like a comforting hum. It made him feel… protected. At home.

Though he'd rather die than admit it to any of them. No doubt they'd eat it up like flies and then they'd *never* leave him alone.

"Shoes off," he grunted as they all barged into the small entry way of the house and dropped their bags throughout the living room and out of the way. "Momma Inko! We're home!"

It took a moment before a voice called back, slightly muffled through the walls. "I'm outside!"

And so, like the annoying ducklings they were, they all followed Katsuki through the house towards the large backyard, loud voices bouncing off the crème walls and giggles sounding as they passed family pictures and fridge magnets.

Their backyard was fairly large considering Katsuki and Izuku both tended to need the room for training. Back when they were kids there'd been a swing set in one of the corners, but it'd long ago been torn apart to create some sort of metal contraption that Katsuki used as a pull up bar. There was a small patio just off the backdoor of the kitchen where Momma Inko had already set up the grill, and there were plenty of cushions and pillows scattered around as seating for the others.

"Oh goodness! There *are* a lot of you aren't there? The boys told me there were, but seeing you all here," she laughed, a bit flustered, "well that's a whole other matter isn't it? Katsuki dear," she waved him forward and tugged her apron off before depositing it over the blonde's head and gesturing towards the grill. "I'm afraid I'm hopeless with this damn thing. Will you finish the burgers while Izu introduces me to your friends?"

It was more of an order than a question, but the blonde rolled his eyes and did as he was asked, though it was mostly to get away from the sudden cooing he heard from behind him the second he was given the apron.

To his surprise, the entire group was extremely polite when introduced to Momma Inko, though some–namely Kaminari, Mina, and Kirishima–were a bit *too* enthusiastic. (Read: loud). Hatsume had already been introduced days ago when Izuku had dragged her into the house very quickly, gave a quick "*hi mom, this is Hatsu, we'll be in the garage"* and disappeared for six hours. Sero just gave a big grin and

a deep bow, while Shinsou just bowed. (Katsuki tried to ignore the strange look he was shooting Momma Inko, putting it down as one of those weird '*spirit*' things he spoke about weeks ago.)

The rest of the night delved into chaos.

But it was nice chaos. The blonde had to admit that the green-haired woman was right. They had needed a break. With the sports festival coming up, everyone was tired and cranky and nervous. Stress levels were at an all-time high and Katsuki was sure half of the pack had barely been sleeping in their anticipation. So being able to just relax with their friends, eating American food that definitely was not healthy, and staying up loud enough to get a complaint from the neighbors for the noise was the perfect remedy through the week.

They spent the hours mostly talking, though eventually Katsuki and Kirishima got it into their heads to spar in the open grass of the backyard- hand to hand, no quirks allowed. The fight lasted for an hour and a half, both boys sweaty and evenly matched, no end in sight, until the gentle shift of Katsuki's tails in and out of view drew the redhead's eye and served as the perfect distraction. With a quick movement of feet that was most definitely one of Izuku's moves, he'd spun around the other boy and in a matter of seconds had him pinned to the ground, the others all cheering and booing respectively.

After that they took turns going up against Shouto while Katsuki sat out to catch his breath. Out of all of them, when it came to hand to hand combat, Kirishima and Izuku were the only ones to be able to stand their ground against the dual-haired boy.

Momma Inko seemed the most impressed, and it was only then that Katsuki remembered that this is the first time she'd really seen what their schooling had led to. Parents hadn't been allowed at the entrance exams, only potential students and instructors. So this was the first time of her getting to see anything other than just Katsuki and Izuku training.

"You're all rather incredible," she breathed when Katsuki dropped onto a cushion next to her chair and leaned up against one of her legs. "After what happened," she mumbled under her breath, "I was worried… I know you're both very strong and you're training to be heroes but… well it was still hard to see that you guys were fighting villains already, that you were both hurt. But seeing you all now?" Momma Inko smiled, watching as Shouto paused the fight with Mina to help correct whatever gods-awful stance she was using and moving

her hands to show her a better method to punch him. “You’ve got a very strong group of friends. Not just with their quirks either, but with their personalities, their bonds. Auntie mentioned that having a pack would make you stronger and… well I can see it now. I can see that I don’t have to worry about the two of you so much anymore. Not with these people around you.”

And it was true. Katsuki could feel it, could feel how much stronger these idiots made him. He wouldn’t inflate their egos anymore by telling them, but something in his chest settled when he watched them fight and cheer each other on. Like the fox knew that he needed to surround himself with the strongest people. Katsuki had never been a people person before. Hell, he still wasn’t. He hated people, hated being around them, hated talking to them. But these morons of his were different, and the fox could sense it. They had bonds that he couldn’t deny even if he wanted to. (And he had for a while, up until the USJ.)

With a grunt, the blonde knocked his head against the older woman’s knee and left it there, crossing his arms over his chest. In front of him, Mina managed to land a decently solid punch on Shouto’s shoulder (not that it did much against him), and Katsuki snorted in laughter as she jumped up and down and cheered. Thus negating the purpose since Shouto used the opportunity to knock her down to the ground.

“We’re okay, mom,” Katsuki said after too long, his voice just barely loud enough to hear. “We’ll be okay, I promise.”

Even more surprising than the fact that he had some actual fun that night, was the fact that Momma Inko had somehow convinced each and every one of their parents, (minus Endeavor, since she’d contacted Fuyumi instead) to allow the kids to spend the night camping in the backyard.

Camping was a loose term, Katsuki figured, as it was really just one giant dog pile of limbs and bodies draped over pillows and blankets and whatever futons they had shoved in the closet. But it was… nice. Katsuki was transformed in the center of the dog pile, his black fur almost blending in with the dark of the night sky had it not been for the burning orange amongst it. Shouto and Izuku had taken up their normal places within the curve of his belly, and the others were sprawled across him in one way or another- Kaminari and Sero cuddled up with his tails, Mina literally spread over his back like a sloth, Kirishima and Hatsume slipped under a large paw as if it were a protective blanket.

Shinsou was sitting next to the short wall of the patio, close enough that the top of Katsuki's head pressed against his leg, but ultimately not as close as the rest of them.

He was awake. Katsuki knew that without even having to look at the purple haired boy. With a careful movement- as to not wake the others- the fox turned his head, plopping it heavy across Shinsou's lap and making the boy beneath him jump in surprise, violet orbs turning down towards red-gold before blinking.

"I thought you were asleep," Shinsou mumbled to which Katsuki scoffed and rolled his eyes. "I didn't wake you, did I?"

The Fox let out a long breath, but didn't bother answering. Instead, he bumped his head against Shinsou's stomach and narrowed his eyes, as if in challenge. Demanding he explain why he was awake, because Katsuki could tell it wasn't just his normal insomnia. Even if it weren't for the rapid beating of the boy's heart, Katsuki could smell the paranoia and worry all but weeping out of Shinsou's skin.

"It's nothing-" a low growl cut him off and Mina grumbled from her position on the fox's back. After waiting a few moments to make sure she hadn't woken, Shinsou let out a sigh. "I need you to promise me something, but I know you're not going to like it." Katsuki tilted his head in question, the fox equivalent of an eyebrow raise. Unsteady fingers played with the fur around the spirit's neck as he drew up whatever courage he needed for his request. "I need you to promise not to use your fox during the festival."

And that wasn't what Katsuki had expected. At all.

He shifted again, head shooting up in confusion and ignoring as Mina slid down his side before landing half on Shouto and half on Sero. She barely seemed bothered by the disruption, so Katsuki turned his full attention on the boy in front of him, narrowing his eyes to demand more information.

"I don't have more information," Shinsou whispered, hands moving to fiddle with the sleeves of his cat sweater since Katsuki was no longer laying in his lap. "I just- you know I have my feelings. About the spirit world," he breathed, the words barely a tickle on the wind, but Katsuki heard it all the same. "I can't explain things to you right now, not until I know more, but… just trust me. You can't use your spirit at the festival. It's too dangerous."

Spirit.

He'd used the actual word *spirit*. As if he knew exactly what Katsuki was, as if he could dig into his mind and see all the secrets that the blonde had to offer.

He didn't realize he was growling until a cool hand pressed against his face, just under his eye and he turned his glare towards Shouto who was blinking sleepily up at him.

"Katsuki? What is it?"

But this night was their night, so he didn't say anything or transform back. He just gave a mighty huff, shot Shinsou another glare, and dropped his head heavy enough onto the boy's lap to make him grunt with the weight. Eventually they'd talk about whatever it was that Shinsou did or didn't know. Eventually he'd get to the bottom of why the boy was so weird around him, why his fog came and went, why he *sensed* spirits.

But for now, it was pack time and he wasn't going to let it be ruined by questions and stupid promises. He just wanted to sleep.

"You're acting weird."

Shouto hummed quietly from where he was watching Izuku on the other side of the bench.

It distracted the taller boy a little. He always loved seeing Izuku in his element, just like he loved seeing Katsuki in his. He figured he could watch Izuku tinker and build and analyze for hours on end if he wanted to. But seeing like he was now, his goggles pushed up onto his forehead and his curls spilling over them like waterfalls, the area around his eyes clear of the soot and grime that covered the rest of his skin, was absolutely the cutest thing Shouto had ever seen.

Ugh, and that *smile*. Blinding, beautiful, *dashing*. He loved it.

A grease stained finger tapped at his nose and Shouto blinked, crossing his eyes to stare at where the boy had left a mark at the tip. Izuku giggled and leaned his elbows on the table and his face in his hands, not seeming bothered by the streaks of grease left in their wake. "You're cute when you're distracted, you know." Shouto hummed and tipped his head to the side and Izuku gave him a fond smile. One of his favorite smiles. (Shouto had been categorizing each and every one of Izuku's and Katsuki's smiles and ranking them by how much they made his stomach flutter and his heart race. That

gentle one, the one he gave when Shouto was acting particularly odd, was number four on the list.) “You weren’t listening to me, were you?”

“Hm,” Shouto frowned, eyebrows pinching up in confusion as he struggled to remember if they’d even been talking about anything. “You are distracting,” he answered instead, to which the greenette blushed and snorted out a giggle.

“I’m not! You’re just easily distracted,” he argued. “I said you’ve been acting weird all day. Are you going to tell me what’s wrong, or do I need to get Katsuki to wring it out of you?”

Shouto’s good mood was crushed in an instant and he flinched, face falling slightly.

Izuku of course noticed, his own smile dropping as he leaned over the workbench. “Oh- It- it was a joke! Katsuki wouldn’t push if you don’t want to talk about it. You know that-“

But Shouto shook his head and gave the boy what he hoped was a reassuring smile. “No, no. It’s nothing bad, just…” he sighed and ran a hand through his hair. “Embarrassing.” Izuku blinked at him in surprise and Shouto slumped down in his seat, voice just barely above a whisper when he spoke. “My sister wants to have dinner with you guys.”

“Huh?”

“My sister,” he said a bit louder this time, cheeks pink and fingers clenched in his sleeves. “She wants to have dinner with you and Katsuki tonight. Since- since the festival is tomorrow. She wants to meet you two so she uh- so she knows who to cheer for when they’re watching it. I guess…”

“Oh.” Izuku’s eyes widened slightly at the implications and he frowned. “I thought we weren’t telling anyone?”

Right… they weren’t. And technically, Shouto hadn’t. “I um… well- she kind of guessed. I didn’t say yes or no, but it’s hard to lie to her so I just kind of didn’t answer and maybe might have ran away and locked myself in my room to avoid her questions. But now she wants to have dinner with whoever my ‘girlfriend’ is,” he groaned. With a heavy breath, he dropped his head into his arms on the dirty table and tried not to pout. “I told her I’d bring them over tonight just to get her to leave me alone.”

The greenette was silent above him. So silent that Shouto had to peak up through his arms to make sure he was even still there. When he did, he saw the bright pink blush across Izuku's cheeks and a worried sort of frown on his lips. "Do you- do you want her to know? You know Katsuki and I don't care as much. At least when it comes to family and stuff- and it's not really fair that our mom knows but you can't tell anyone. But like, that was your rule, so I guess it's okay if you break it right?" He babbled, continuing on even as Shouto sat up to speak. "But like- I know your dad, maybe not as much as you do obviously, but I really think telling him is a bad idea. I guess I don't know your sister, but I don't know if we should be worried. Then again, you were the one who said you'd bring us right? So like, you have to think it'd be okay at least somewhat-"

"Izuku."

Shouto had circled the workbench slowly during the boy's rant, the anxiety in his own chest settling into something loving at the way the boy freaked out for his sake. He took two baby-faced cheeks in his hands and smiled when the boy shut up instantly.

"I trust my sister not to make a big deal about it. And she knows better than to tell my dad," Shouto explained carefully. "He's supposed to be out of town tonight anyway, an extra patrol to make up for missing tomorrow since he'll be at the sports festival. I just-" he swallowed and glanced down at where his thumbs traced Izuku's jawline. "I was just nervous that you two wouldn't want to since- well you're right, I was the one to set the rule. And my family isn't exactly… the best," he cringed. "But Fuyumi and Natsuo are great, they really are. And I would… like to introduce you."

The blinding smile he received in return and the surprised, sort of shy, smile Katsuki gave him later when it was brought up quickly jumped to the top of his list.

By the time Shouto made it home, with the promise that both boys would be there at seven on the dot, Fuyumi was in full swing. The house was practically spotless- not that it wasn't usually, but he was pretty sure the floor was literally sparkling- and the smell of Katsudon was gently wafting through the halls. Fuyumi was flustering around the kitchen when he finally got dressed and made his way to see how she was doing.

Apparently not well.

“Oh- it’s just been so long since I’ve made Katsudon,” she whined, flapping her hands on her apron and huffing. “The pork isn’t cooking right and I can’t find the onions and- oh! I forgot to even start the rice!”

Fuyumi was fantastic. Shouto hadn’t lied earlier when he said she was great and he loved her. She had practically raised Shouto and he would never be able to repay her for that. But one thing she had always been awful at, was cooking. Shouto had grown up on soba noodles and easy rice meals. Natsuo had cooked a lot when he lived with them, but since he moved off to college, it’d been a lot of easy meals that Fuyumi or Shouto could make (since the youngest of the siblings was also awful at cooking).

“You’ve burnt the pork,” he said helpfully, making the older woman squawk and turn, grabbing at the smoking pan.

“That was my second attempt,” she all but sobbed, dropping her head into her hands and groaning. “I just wanted to have a nice dinner.”

Shouto frowned, reaching out a bit awkwardly to pat her head. He wasn’t very good at comforting people, but Katsuki always patted his hair when Shouto was emotional, so he figured it might help. “We have time, we can try again. Besides, you didn’t have to make Katsudon. They’ll be happy with whatever we make. Honestly we could probably get take out and they’d be fine with it.”

Fuyumi’s head shot up quickly, face twisted and scandalous as she scoffed. “Take out? Shouto! This is the first girlfriend you’ve brought home! Probably the first girlfriend ever,” she told him, as if he didn’t already know that. She batted his hand away and placed her hands on his shoulders. “I can’t invite her over just for *take-out*, and you said she liked Katsudon or Udon, so that’s what I’m going to make, damn it!”

Chuckling, the younger boy nodded. “I would offer to help, but I’m arguably worse than you. How you even found out I was dating anyone is still a mystery to me.”

He’d said it as a joke, but something shifted in the air with his words. He could feel it in the way Fuyumi’s hands grew heavier on his shoulders, how her face got that soft look it always did when she was falling into her ‘mom’ role. She smiled, bringing her hands up to frame Shouto’s face and simply said, “You’ve been smiling more.”

“Oh.”

He hadn't really noticed. Truly he hadn't. But now that she'd pointed it out, he couldn't deny it. Shouto had always been a little awkward, a little anti-social. He was fine with that. Before UA, he didn't care because he'd been convinced (and trained) that he didn't need anyone else. They'd only get in his way. He hadn't really known what he'd been missing until Izuku had fumbled his way into his life, dragging Katsuki with him.

So yeah, he supposed he had been smiling more. Every time he looks at his phone and sees a text, every time he looks at a picture of the three of them, every time he remembers something stupid Katsuki did in class or something Izuku blew up in the labs.

He was smiling because for the first time in as long as he could remember… he was happy.

"Fuyumi- um… there's something I need to tell you," he said quietly, nervously, but as soon as he opened his mouth to tell her the truth, the doorbell rang. "Oh- um… that might be- I'll go get it," he stumbled, turning quickly away from her to rush towards the door.

It was still early, nearly 30 minutes early, but if Shouto knew anything it was that Katsuki had to be early or on time to anything, or else he wouldn't show at all. Which was cute, but Shouto thought he'd have more time to prepare himself. Not that he was worried about his boyfriends, he was more worried about how his family would react to them. Neither Fuyumi or Natsuo had ever cared about sexualities, in fact Fuyumi had admitted years ago that she was bisexual, but still… she'd sounded so excited to hear that Shouto had a *girl*friend… he wasn't sure how she'd react to not only him having a *boy*friend, but to him having two of them.

Not to mention that Katsuki was rather crash, and Izuku was very hyper… he wasn't ashamed of them by any means, it was just- well he wanted his sister to like them. He wasn't sure what he'd do if she didn't.

"Hey boys! Sorry but- do you have the wrong house?"

An all too familiar voice came drifting through the closed door and Shouto's heart lurched to his throat faster than he could get the door open.

There stood Katsuki and Izuku on the front porch, dressed smart but casual in their jackets and button ups. And even though they'd both turned to the other speaker, he could still see the line of khol around

Katsuki's eyes and wondered if he'd done his makeup for the occasion or if he just hadn't had time to scrub off all his eyeliner from their earlier training. Either way it looked hot and Shouto wasn't quite sure what to do with himself. Izuku looked just as nice, his cheeks dusted pink and a bundle of flowers in his hands whereas Katsuki's were shoved in his pockets.

And behind the two… was Natsuo.

The eldest Todoroki was dressed smartly as well, with a confused but excited grin on his face as he found Shouto in the doorway. "Sho! Surprise!"

"You weren't supposed to be here."

His brother snorted and rolled his eyes before stepping forward and slinging an arm around his shoulders. "What? You think I was going to miss dinner with your very first girlfriend? Not a chance, little bro!"

Shouto groaned, dropping his head forward into his hands. He had been prepared for the awkward mothering that Fuyumi would no doubt show throughout the dinner. He hadn't expected Natsuo to show up to embarrass him. Which he would. "How did you even find out?"

"Yumi called me."

Shouto groaned again but when he glanced up at his boyfriends, Izuku looked mildly amused and Katsuki had a weird mix of confusion and anger etched into his beautiful face. The blonde raised an eyebrow at him. "Girlfriend?"

"Yup," Natsuo said with a smack of his lips, laughing too loudly for how close he was to the dual-haired sibling. "Sorry if he forgot to tell you guys, but our little peppermint here has a date. Speaking of, is she here already? I tried to be early-"

"Natsu-"

Izuku's giggle passed through the air and Shouto sighed. The greenette covered his mouth, but it did nothing to hide his grin. "Peppermint?"

"Shut up," Shouto sighed, shoving a finger into Katsuki's chest as the blonde snorted. "You do not have permission to call me that, you troll." He nudged his brother's arm off his shoulder and pushed the man into the house. "Go help Fuyumi before she burns the pork.

Again.” Natsuo laughed and waved before bouncing off towards the kitchen. As soon as he was out of sight, Shouto tipped forward until his head was pressed against Katsuki’s shoulder. “This is going to be a nightmare. Natsuo wasn’t going to be here. He’s going to embarrass me.”

Katsuki snorted above him again and patted his hair fondly. “Good. That’s the fuckin’ point of family dinners. Now you gonna let us in, or are we gonna have to pretend we’re not your girlfriend and leave?”

“Don’t you dare,” Shouto mumbled as he straightened up. He knew Katsuki wasn’t serious, but he still dropped an apologetic kiss to the boy’s lips before doing the same to Izuku. “I um… I haven’t gotten the chance to tell them yet and- well… I’m just nervous. Fuyumi and Natsuo are the only members of my family that matter and- and I want them to like you both.”

Izuku smiled and took Shouto’s hand gently in his. “Don’t worry, it’ll be fine! Katsuki promised to be on his best behavior.”

“Oi! I’m always on my best behavior,” the blonde argued.

A loud cry from the kitchen interrupted their conversation and Shouto flinched. “I hope you like take out, because it looks like that’s what we’ll be having. Fuyumi’s been trying to cook but neither of us are very good at it. She’s burnt the pork twice already.”

“She fuckin’ what?”

Without another word, Katsuki stormed past him and into the house, stopping only to switch his shoes out for slippers before following his nose towards the kitchen. Shouto and Izuku quickly followed, the former of the two sputtering and grabbing at Katsuki’s sleeves to slow him down, but the fox wouldn’t allow it. By the time they got to the kitchen, the blonde was practically seething.

“It’s Katsudon!” He squawked, arms jutting out towards the pork that was burning on the stove and surprising both of the siblings already standing around it. “It’s literally one of the easiest meals to make!”

And yeah… Shouto should have known better. Because Katsuki *loves* cooking. The dual-haired boy likes to tease him about it, but Katsuki loves it and he’s really, really good at it too. The days he brings Shouto lunch are some of his favorite days ever. So letting Fuyumi cook for him probably wasn’t the best idea if the offended scowl on the boy’s face was anything to go by.

“Um- I’m sorry?”

“Yeah, you should be!” Katsuki replied to his sister, pushing forward and snatching pan out of her hands. With barely a glance in her direction, he stomped over to the trash and dumped the pork into it before shoving the garbage in Natsuo’s direction. “Take this out. I can’t cook if it smells like burnt pig in here. And you, out of my way before you butcher another perfectly good piece of meat,” he ordered, all but shoving Fuyumi out of the way.

“Kaachan, don’t be rude,” Izuku sighed before turning towards the two shocked older siblings. “I apologize for him. He’s very um… prissy about cooking.” Katsuki growled from his position over the stove, but didn’t argue so Izuku held out the flowers in his hands. “Um, these are for you. I didn’t- we weren’t expecting both of you, so I’m sorry we didn’t bring you anything Todoroki-San.”

Natsuo waved the words away by habit, but Shouto could tell they were both still extremely confused. With a sigh, he gestured towards Izuku and tried for his best smile. “Fuyumi, Natsuo, this is Izuku and Katsuki. They’re my… umm- they’re my partners?”

Katsuki snorted and shot the boy a glare over his shoulder. “Just say boyfriends, you weirdo. Partners makes it sound like we’re criminals or something.”

It took a few more moments of silence before, thankfully, Fuyumi seemed to jump back into herself and she jolted. “Oh! *Oh! That’s* why you kept saying ‘they’ instead of ‘she’. I just was wondering if we needed to adjust pronouns, not- well. Okay,” she laughed, awkwardly rubbing her neck before bowing. “It’s so nice to meet you both. I’m sorry, you’ve caught us both by surprise. Shouto didn’t mention much about you.”

“You just sounded so excited,” Shouto mumbled, as if it wasn’t completely his fault in the first place.

“Come now, let me take those flowers and put them in some water. Katsuki, are you sure you don’t want me to help,” she offered again, glancing back at the blonde even as she took the flowers.

Shouto watched in amusement as the boy pointed his spatula at her and glared. “You come near this kitchen in the next thirty minutes and you don’t get any. Now get out. Let me cook. You’re about to have the best damn Katsudon you’ve ever tasted in your life.”

Which was probably true.

Shouto couldn’t help but smile.

Chapter End Notes

This is only going to be part one of the family dinner, we'll finish it next chapter so don't worry! We'll get to see more of Fuyumi and Natsuo.

Hope everyone liked this chapter! As much as I LOVE fluff, I'm awful at writing it. I'm much better with angst, so I hope this was okay!

Chapter 16: Teeth

Chapter Summary

Endeavor crashes dinner plans.

Chapter Notes

I heard Emowolf10 was hiding in a bunker trying to get away from the angst?

Breaks door down and throws in ALL THE ANGST

Merry early Christmas!

Also Trigger Warnings for referencing Endeavor's shitty parenting and abuse. Nothing described, but it's referenced.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“So Izuku- is it alright to call you Izuku? Is that your family name?”

Izuku blushed and shook his head as he sat next to Shouto at the kotatsu. “Ah- no. My family name is Midoriya, but please, call me Izuku. It just makes it a little less confusing. My mom adopted Katsuki, so we have the same family name. We’ve been best friends since we were infants, our moms were really good friends,” he explained quickly, remembering what his mom had said about people thinking that weird.

Fuyumi smiled softly though and nodded. “That’s wonderful! Do you go to UA then? Is that how you all met?”

“At the entrance exams,” Shouto chimed in. “Izuku and I were watching while Katsuki was participating.”

“Oh! So you’re not in the hero course then?” Natuso asked as he plopped down next to his sister, having taken the trash out as Kaachan had asked.

Shaking his head, the greenette rubbed the back of his neck nervously at the question. “Ah- no. I’m in the support course. My friend Hatsume and I were actually paired up directly with Shouto and Kaachan’s class, so we’re their personal support slaves. We make their costumes and help analyze their training sessions and stuff. It’s a lot of fun and I

get to see them both a lot more at school than we expected, so that's nice!"

"That's so cute," the white haired woman cooed, leaning on her hands and grinning. "I'm so happy for you all. Not only does Shouto have someone to care about him at school, but he has *two!* That's so wonderful."

Shouto groaned and rolled his eyes up to the ceiling. "Don't embarrass me, Yumi…"

"Oh Sho, that's my job!"

The conversation flittered about for a little while, never settling on anything in particular while they waited on Kaachan to finish cooking. And Izuku found he really liked Shouto's siblings. They were both significantly older- Fuyumi being a teacher and Natsuo being in med school- but they were kind and accepting of the fact that Shouto had boyfriends. Which Izuku was incredibly grateful for. The eldest sister was a bit more towards Shouto's temperament, he noticed. A lot more reserved, calmer, all gentle smiles and twinkling laughs. But she wasn't quite as boisterous as Natsuo. The man reminded Izuku a lot of Kirishima, actually. He was a lot of booming laughs and wild movements. So drastically different from the other in the family that Izuku was surprised he came from them at all. Still, Izuku enjoyed talking to him, as the older Todoroki was able to keep up with his babbling and excited ranting pretty easily.

But they were nice, and they seemed genuinely happy for Shouto, so Izuku found himself rather comfortable in the unfamiliar home, with these unfamiliar people.

"Alright you annoying gaggle of loud motherfuckers," Katsuki interrupted, walking into the room with a smirk plastered on his face and drawing silence in his wake. His apron had disappeared, along with his coat, and his sleeves were rolled up to his elbows, showing off the impressive muscles of his forearms. As for the food, he had two bowls balanced precariously on each arm, one in his hand, and a bottle of sauce in his other. "Dinner is served."

Shouto was on his feet in an instant, rushing over to help by taking a few of the plates from the blonde's arms and helping him dish them out to everyone at the table, and the table fell into another comfortable round of conversation. Mostly about Kaachan's cooking, which of course made the Kitsune preen at the praise.

“It’s the nerd’s favorite food,” he shrugged, nodding towards Izuku and smirking when the greenette blushed. “So I make it a lot. I’ve had to learn how to change it up every once in a while though because plain Katsudon gets old fast when you have it for a week straight.”

Izuku pouted, frowning at his best friend. “Kaachan! I was having a bad week! Besides, you *offered*!”

Across from them, Natsuo snorted out a laugh and shook his head. “It’s not nearly as bad as Shouto. When he was younger, the only thing we could ever get him to eat was Cold Soba,” he told them, ignoring the hand that Shouto shot out to shut him up. “I’m not even kidding. For exactly 364 days, all he ate was soba, breakfast lunch and dinner. We managed to change it up some by putting in meats and veggies sometimes, but no joke, it’s all he would eat.”

“That’s so cute,” Izuku crooned, leaning into Shouto’s arm and giggling at the shade of red the boy had turned. “What made him stop?”

Fuyumi smiled. “His birthday. He wanted cold soba cake, which doesn’t exist mind you, but I told him he wasn’t allowed to celebrate his birthday without cake.” Her laugh rang sweetly around the room as she reached out to pat the boy’s hair fondly. “Shouto was so upset because we managed to convince him that birthdays are the only time you’re allowed presents and cake and if he didn’t eat cake then he couldn’t have a birthday. It finally managed to kick him out of his soba obsession.”

“He still eats it like it’s his religion,” Katsuki scowled, pointing his chopsticks in Shouto’s direction. “He even asked me to make it for him Monday. As if I have time in my schedule to make you stupid limp noodles.”

Izuku smiled at the almost innocent look the heterochromic boy shot their other boyfriend and Shouto pouted. “You still made it for me though.”

Katsuki scoffed. “Of fuckin’ course I did.”

Eventually they migrated towards the living area after all helping to clean the dishes and the absolute mess Fuyumi had made of the kitchen. The topic easily fell into their schooling, mostly because the boys didn’t really have much else to talk about, and Natsuo’s gentle prodding ended up in a solid thirty minutes of Izuku explaining the inner workings of Katsuki’s gauntlets and Shouto’s temp regulator that

he'd built both of them. He wanted nothing more than to go off into the support items he'd built for himself over the past week, but considering two of his sports festival rivals were in the room, he didn't want to give anything away just yet.

"Izu, you're gonna chat their ears off. Jesus, take a breath," Kaachan mumbled fondly, elbowing the shorter boy in the ribs with a roll of his eyes. Izuku knew he only meant it as a gentle reminder that Izuku had the bad habit of babbling on until someone stopped him.

The two older siblings just laughed and shook their heads however, Fuyumi batting her hands in the air in front of her. "Oh no- please, it's honestly a relief. Shouto here is so quiet, and since Natsu has been in college, I swear these walls don't hear any genuine conversation anymore," she said sweetly. "Besides, it's really incredible what you do, Izuku. All we've ever really heard about is hero work, from Shouto and our dad. So hearing about the behind the scenes stuff is really interesting too. It goes to show how important the support courses are as well since they don't tend to get as much attention as the heroes do. Your mom must be so proud. Does she have an intelligence quirk too?"

And there it was.

Honestly, he was surprised it hadn't come up sooner. In a world so focused on quirks and heroes, Izuku was used to everyone's first questions being about his quirk. Even in Kaachan's class, it was one of the first he was asked. So the fact that they'd made it almost an hour and a half into their dinner before the topic was even brought up was impressive. It made him like the Todoroki siblings even that much more.

"Ah, no," Izuku said slowly, raising a hand up to rub at the side of his neck. "She has a floating sort of quirk. I'm actually quirkless."

"Holy crap," Natsuo said immediately, not even letting the information settle before he leaned forward. "So you got into UA all on your own? That's fucking badass!"

And… that was *not* something Izuku had expected. Shouto had simply moved on from the topic when he told him, and their class had done the same. But never had he been told that not having a quirk was cool, not from anyone other than Kaachan at least. He blinked at the white haired man and swallowed. "I- uh- what?"

"The fact that you got into the top hero school in the country on just

your intelligence alone?" Natsuo repeated, looking at Izuku like he was… like he was nothing short of a miracle. "I didn't even know UA *allowed* quirkless students with how dangerous things can get there. You're fucking incredible aren't you?"

"Natsu-" Shouto interrupted, his face screwed up in an adorably protective manner that had Izuku placing a hand on his.

"It's okay," he said quickly, shaking his head. "Sorry you just- most people don't react that way. It did take a lot of convincing for them to let me in and I had to fill out a bunch of extra paperwork, but I think it was worth it. I want to be a hero one day and show the world that you don't have to have a quirk to help people."

The siblings smiled at that and Fuyumi placed a hand on her older brother's shoulder. "That's wonderful, Izuku. It's probably not much of a shock to you, but quirks have always been very… important in this family," she said carefully, a weird sort of grimace on her lips. "At least to *some* people. I have my mom's ice quirk but it's not very strong. Natsu though, if you asked our dad he'd say he's just like you."

Which surprised Izuku into sitting up straight. "You're quirkless?"

But the man shook his head. "Not exactly. I have the joint and everything, but whatever quirk I have is practically non-existent. Always has been. Most I can do is raise or lower my body temperature at will, and not by much. Not like Shouto can." He reached a hand over the table and Izuku didn't hesitate to take it. It took a second for him to notice, but the man's skin was slowly dropping in temperature until it was just slightly chilled. "It's nice in the summers, and when someone's running a fever or something. But that's about as much as I can do. Might as well be quirkless in this family."

An uncomfortable sort of air settled over the room at that and it took a while before Katsuki snorted, rolling his eyes from where he was lounged across the floor, leaning back on his elbows. "That's fuckin' dumb."

"Kaachan-"

"No, I've told you, and I'm gonna tell him to," he said, sitting up and jabbing a finger in Natsuo's direction. "Quirks aren't everything. Don't fuckin' care what kind of ass you have for a dad. He's fuckin' wrong. Yeah," he shrugged, motioning towards himself and Shouto, "We're strong as *fuck*, and we're gonna be the best heroes one day. We're gonna save a million people and make your dad eat our dust. But

we're all doing the same thing. Izu's gonna be a great hero with his support items, and you're gonna be a great hero in the hospital. What- you think I'm going to be out there performing lifesaving surgery on the person I just rescued from a collapsing building?" He scoffed, shaking his head. "Fuck no, I'm gonna leave that to you, the professional. Doctors save lives just like heroes do, just in a different setting. Who gives a flying fuck if you have a quirk or not. If you're determined enough, you can do whatever the fuck you want."

Izuku could feel the tears prickling against the back of his eyes like they always did when Kaachan had to give him that same speech, but it was different watching him give it to someone else. To outsiders, the blonde was so brash, made up of sharp edges and explosive rage. He put so much stock into his own quirk that most people thought he cared about other's quirks too. And he did, to an extent. But Izuku knew better.

Kaachan put more stock in the power behind the person than their quirk. He cared about how strong *you* were, how *determined* you were and how hard you worked. He hated the people with strong quirks who just flittered by in life, hated the people who gave up because their quirks weren't strong enough. The fact that Natsuo still wanted to help people even without a strong quirk no doubt made Katsuki almost proud of the older man.

"Well…" Everyone was blinking at the blonde and he scowled.

"*What?*"

"Nothing!" Natsuo laughed, waving his hands. "It's just… nice to hear is all. You're a good kid, Katsuki. I'm glad Shouto found you. Both of you. It's really refreshing to see him with people who care."

Izuku wondered briefly if his face was as bright as Kaachan's and they both sputtered in embarrassment, drawing a soft, barely-existent laugh out of their boyfriend.

"Just-" Kaachan started, only to stop himself midway, growling and turning away to cross his arms over his chest. "Stop being so fuckin' mushy. Jesus, I expected a shovel talk or something, not a fuckin' marriage proposal."

That drew laughter back into the room and the oldest Todoroki shrugged. "I can give you a shovel talk if you want, but something tells me you don't need it."

Kaachan opened his mouth to reply before he froze, his entire body locking up in surprise and eyes widening. It drew Izuku and Shouto's attention immediately, even the other two Todoroki's frowning in confusion.

"Kaachan?"

Katsuki could smell him the instant he touched the ground outside. It came in an cloud of billowing, suffocating smoke. In waves of anger and hatred and disgust, all riding on the stench of coal and gasoline. *Fuck*, Katsuki could feel the heat from there, seeping into his bones and screaming at him to move, to grab Izuku and Shouto and *run*, because as much as he didn't want to admit it, he wouldn't be able to win that fight. Not right now. The fox in him wanted to fight back, but he couldn't. He *couldn't*.

A hand settled on his shoulder. "Kaachan?"

He could feel the low rumble of his growls in his chest, feel his fangs pressing against his lip as he struggled to fight the fox back into his skin. The need to grab Shouto and hide him away, to protect him, was almost overwhelming.

"Is he… okay?"

The voice was hesitant, muffled in his ears, but Shouto's response was clear as day, like his fox knew who to focus on. "Just, stay over there. His quirk can be… protective," Shouto warns and in an instant the boy was in his line of vision, crouched in front of him with his hands framing Katsuki's face. Izuku was beside him, holding Katsuki's hand tight in his own as they both struggled to figure out what was wrong. "Katsuki? Can you tell us what's happening?"

Kill him. Sink your teeth into his throat. If you're fast enough, he wouldn't be able to stop you.

"I'm going to kill him," he growled, baring his sharpened teeth and seething. "If he comes in here, I'm going to kill him. I will."

Shouto must have seen something familiar in Katsuki's eyes, because his own reflected the fear that Katsuki knew he was feeling. Across from them however, the two older siblings tensed and Natsuo swallowed. "He's uh- he's not talking about me right? I was just kidding about the shovel talk-"

A door slammed in the distance and Katsuki was on his feet in an instant, already taking a protective stance in front of Izuku and the Todoroki siblings. He could sense the shift in the air as they registered what was happening and who Katsuki was threatening, could smell the sharp spices and rot in the air. The way they mixed with the burning that was heading towards them almost made the fox light headed.

“You said he was supposed to be on patrol tonight,” Natsuo said quietly.

Behind him, Fuyumi stood, the others standing with her and she took an unsteady step forward. “He was! He wasn’t supposed to be back until past midnight-“

“*Shouto!*”

The booming voice drew a loud growl from Katsuki’s throat and if it weren’t for the strong hands holding him back, he would have shot forward to attack the second the massive figure appeared in the doorway.

Endeavor was larger than Katsuki expected, even outside of his hero costume. His hair and beard were still flaming, his muscles still massive and imposing, but Katsuki could barely see past the fox, could barely focus on anything besides the vein that throbbed in the pro-hero’s throat.

Just one bite. That’s all it’d take-

“Shouto. What is going on? Who are these children?”

“Dad,” Fuyumi answered instead, rushing forward and only stopping when she got even with the three teenagers. She’d tried to step in front of them but the fox growled at the attempt, making them all stare at him in shock. “I um… we thought you were on patrol tonight.”

Endeavor’s eyes never left Katsuki, even as his daughter spoke, his eyebrow raised as if the fox was nothing but a kitten. “I got off early. The festival is tomorrow and Shouto needs to train. He should not be… fooling around with whoever these two are.”

“They’re my friends from school,” Shouto said carefully, in that voice that Katsuki *hated*, and his face was kept so incredibly blank of emotion. “I invited them over for dinner.”

“You are wasting time,” Endeavor interrupted, stepping out of the doorway and gesturing towards it. “They will leave. You need to train before bed and I won’t let you waste my time as well.” As if by afterthought, he glanced behind the trio with a frown. “Natsuo, I was not aware you had today off of school.”

The white haired man stood tall, eyes narrowed at his father. “I didn’t. Fuyumi asked me to come over to meet Shouto’s friends. His *first friends*, so I thought it’d be nice to visit. *You* weren’t supposed to be here.”

The hatred in his voice surprisingly calmed Katsuki a bit, surprised to hear the way he stood up to his own father. Not that the bastard seemed to care, because he just turned his gaze back towards Katsuki and frowned, as if he was confused as to why they were still there. “Well? Leave.”

“No.”

Shouto’s fingers tightened around Katsuki’s wrist. “Katsuki-“

“*No*.”

He couldn’t leave. Not knowing what he did. Not knowing that the second Endeavor had entered the room, the stench of black fog began seeping out of the others, like just seeing him brought up traumatic memories they’d otherwise forgotten. So he couldn’t leave.
He *couldn’t*. Not knowing that the second he did, those burning hands would be on Shouto. Hurting him. Destroying him.

“Mr. Endeavor, sir,” Izuku piped up from right behind Katsuki’s opposite shoulder, his voice surprisingly calm. “We’re just here to visit. Shouto’s been training very hard all week for the festival. Sometimes a rest is good, and we all need to be ready for what tomorrow can bring.”

The flames that licked around the man’s face seemed to burn brighter as his eyes landed on the green-haired boy. Katsuki shifted his body to cover Izuku from him, a warning growl rising in his throat. “I’ll decide what he does and doesn’t need, *boy*. Now leave.”

It was getting harder and harder for Katsuki to fight back against the fox underneath his skin. He could feel his tails flickering in and out of view, feel his claws digging into the skin of his palms. He wanted so badly to lose control but he wouldn’t win. The fox didn’t care, but the human in him… the one who knew just how powerful Endeavor was,

knew that he wouldn't stand a chance in hell against the man. Against the *number two hero* in Japan. He'd be burnt to a crisp before he could even move.

And now he was supposed to just *leave* Shouto here? To be hurt?

Endeavor sighed, taking a step forward and only stopping as Katsuki's growls grew louder, almost ear piercing in warning. "Take one more step and I swear to god I'll rip your throat out," he spat, barely even aware of what he was saying.

"Are you threatening me, child?"

It *was* a threat, but the way the man asked sent shivers down Katsuki's spine because-

Because he was *scared*. It was like the sludge monster all over again. He was facing a villain that was so out of his league that he didn't know what to do. He didn't know how to win and that scared him so much. How was he supposed to be the number one hero if he couldn't even protect his own boyfriend?

"Katsuki, you two should go."

"*No."* He wanted to scream, yet still he allowed Shouto to tug on his wrist, pulling him out of that protective stance and towards the door.

Fuyumi bustled behind them, all painful smiles and sickly rot as she placed herself between her father and the boys. "Shouto, why don't you show the boys out, okay? I'll make sure to clean up, no need to worry about that."

It took both Shouto and Izuku to drag Katsuki out the front door, literally kicking and screaming, and it wasn't until the door shut between them and Endeavor that Katsuki was finally able to take a breath. Shouto's emotionless face finally cracked and Katsuki could see the fear in those eyes, the anger in the press of his lips. He *hated* it.

"Come home with us," he said before he could stop himself, fingers grasping at the taller boy's and tugging him, as if he could just pull Shouto into himself and never let him go. "Don't go back in there."

"Katsuki-"

"You *can't*," the fox argued, barely managing to hold back a whine when Shouto pulled out of his grasp and stepped back.

“You two should leave,” Shouto said slowly, carefully, like he was afraid of confirming what Katsuki’s suspicions were. Not that he needed to. Just the fact that the older Todoroki’s were worried about Endeavor being home early was enough to tell Katsuki that they knew what was going on. Hell, they could have been subjected to the same treatment. He didn’t know.

When neither boy moved, Shouto swallowed and pushed Katsuki into Izuku. “*Please* leave. I don’t want you two getting hurt.”

“That’s why we can’t fucking let you stay,” Katsuki argued loudly, moving to reach out towards the boy only to have Izuku hold him back. He rounded on the shorter boy with a snarl, but Izuku didn’t flinch. “You’re fucking on his side?”

“Kaachan, what do you plan on doing?” The question brought him up short and he froze, eyes narrowed into a glare and fists clenching. “What do you plan on doing?” He asked again, because the question sounded important. “He’s the number two hero in Japan and you’re a first year student. We have no proof of what we think is happening and Shouto doesn’t want anyone finding out. So what would we do?”

He knew that. He *did*. But it didn’t mean it didn’t *hurt*. It physically ached in his chest, his heart burning against the inside of his ribs with even the *thought* of walking away right now.

“Tomorrow,” Katsuki warned, turning on his heel because if he had to look at Shouto’s face right now he couldn’t promise he wouldn’t storm right back into that house. “If this isn’t over tomorrow then I don’t give a shit if you never speak to me again. I’m stopping it.”

And with that, he walked away.

There were plenty of times that Inko could remember when the boys had fought. They lived together and they were boys, of course they fought. It was usually just playful however. It was petty little arguments. Things like who’s turn it was to choose the movie, who broke the bowl in the kitchen, who was better at what game.

The only time she’d ever seen them seriously fight was the day they’d been attacked earlier that summer. The day they’d been rescued by All Might. They hadn’t spoken to each other the entire night, and neither of them would tell her why. She hadn’t needed to worry much however, as the next day they were back to being best friends, only a little bit of residual tension left over. Still, it was the worst fight

between them that she'd seen their entire lives.

The point is, she hadn't expected them to come home from dinner at Shouto's practically screaming at each other.

No, not *practically*. Because Katsuki was *literally* screaming.

"*Don't you fucking touch me right now. Don't even come near me or I'm going to tear you to shreds with my bare fucking hands you useless excuse for a fucking hero*!"

The threat had Inko running to the living room where Izuku was still in the doorway, tears welled up in his eyes and face stricken with worry and grief. Katsuki was prowling, stomping and pacing and tearing at his hair like a wild creature. Inko had never seen him so distraught, so utterly broken. Like he was torn to pieces and someone had tried shoving them all back together only to leave the sharp edges uncovered and unprotected. He looked wrecked.

"Boys," she said cautiously, holding her hands up as if it'd serve to calm them but she only received a panicked look from her green-haired son. "Why don't we take a deep breath and tell me what's going on."

Izuku shook his head and turned back to the blonde, voice scratchy and raw as he spoke. "Kaachan, we can't do anything now. It's going to be fine, you heard Shouto-"

"Don't you fucking tell me it's going to be fine," Katsuki snapped back, his voice riding on top of a vicious growl that Inko had never heard before. It sounded so pained, so broken, that it tore at her heartstrings. "Don't tell me that. Not when we just *left* him there."

"We can't do anything-"

"*I don't care!*"

The sound echoed off the walls and to Inko's surprise she saw tears streaming down the angry boy's cheeks. In all their fifteen years of being her sons, she couldn't remember the last time she'd seen Katsuki cry. She knew he had. Izuku had told her the night after she picked them up from the police station. He'd told her how scared Katsuki looked under the sludge, how his tears had mixed with the brown muck that was suffocating him. But she couldn't remember a time the boy had ever cried in front of her like this.

“You don’t get it. You don’t feel what I can,” Katsuki argued, clutching at his chest like he wanted nothing more than to tear his own heart out. “It’s taking *everything* in me not to go back there. *Everything* to keep the fox inside because it *hurts*, Izuku. It is tearing me apart knowing what’s happening right now. It’s the same as the USJ when I saw you sitting in a puddle of your blood. You’re- you’re my *pack* and it’s killing me to know when my pack is hurting-“

“Stop.”

Both boys froze and turned towards Inko, taking in her frightened expression and her heavy breathing. She couldn’t help it. As much as she wanted to be the gentle, caring mother, whatever happening right now was hurting them both and she knew she’d have to step in or they’d only keep screaming.

“Someone tell me what is going on right now.”

“We can’t,” the boys said together, Katsuki’s face twisting up in rage as he faced Izuku.

But Inko folded her arms because like *hell* was she going to let them tear each other apart. “The hell you can’t,” she argued. “Someone is going to tell me what’s going on, right now, or we’re going to have problems.”

Izuku was already shaking his head, and Inko could see Katsuki’s fists shaking at his sides, like he was struggling just standing still enough to *think*. “No mom- you don’t get it, we can’t-“

“Shouto’s being abused.”

Inko could count on one hand the amount of times her heart had stopped in her lifetime.

The first was when she was in college and she’d been in a bad car accident. She’d been dead for two and a half minutes, the doctors had said. Mitsuki hadn’t left her side the entire time she was in the hospital. The second was when she’d found out she was pregnant with Izuku, the third when she’d held him for the first time.

The fourth time was now.

Not only was it devastating to know a child was being hurt, but to know that child was Shouto? So much of what the boy did, how he acted, made sense now. The way he was so quiet, the way he flinched

sometimes when someone got too loud, the way he stared at her sometimes like he didn't understand why she was being so kind to him.

Gods it broke her heart.

"Kaachan!" Izuku's voice pulled her from her stupor, the betrayal evident. "You promised!"

"I promised not to tell the teachers," he growled back, surprising her. "I didn't promise shit about mom."

"Okay," She breathed, forcing herself to calm down and focus on the two boys in front of her. "Why don't we sit down and talk about this. I'm not sure about the process of getting him help but if you think he's in danger right now, we should probably call the police-"

But Izuku shook his head again and Katsuki growled. "Shouto said we can't, not yet."

Katsuki snarled and dug his hands in his hair again. "He said after tomorrow it wouldn't matter. He said the old man would stop after tomorrow, after Shouto proves that he won't use his quirk. And it's always '*training*', as if that means it's not fucking *abuse*."

Which, unfortunately meant getting the boy help would be more difficult. Because if he wasn't willing to talk, then charges wouldn't go through. Not with whatever lawyers the number two hero had on payroll.

Inko felt sick.

"Okay," she said, walking slowly up to the crying fox and putting her hands gently on his shoulders. He looked up at her, his eyes so incredibly vulnerable and it made tears well up in her own eyes. "Okay, I believe you. But Katsuki, if Shouto isn't willing to get help, then there's nothing we can do right now. We need proof, we need him to ask for help or I can't do anything," she told him, knowing it wasn't what he wanted to hear. A sob wrecked through the boy and Inko sighed, tugging him into her arms as tight as she could, holding him through the pain and the torment he was feeling. "I know it's hard, baby. I know. But Shouto is strong and we'll try, okay? I have some friends in law enforcement. I can ask them some questions, see what our chances are without proof. But I'm sorry baby, right now there's nothing we can do but be strong for him okay?"

Katsuki sniffled, red eyes rising to meet green and he frowned. “Strong for him?”

She nodded, brushing some of his hair out of his face and forcing a smile. “Shouto is hurting right now and he thinks he’s alone. He thinks he has to do this all by himself which is why he's pushing the two of you away. Just like you yell when you're upset, Shouto goes quiet. We need to be there for him, okay? Show him that he can trust us and that we care about him, show him that *when* he decides to ask for help, that we'll give it."

"I've already told him we'd help," Katsuki argued.

"I know, baby, but if what you think is happening is true, then he's probably been living with it his whole life. He's never had anyone there to help him and he's had to support himself through all that pain and all those emotions," she told him, pulling the boy towards the couch and helping him sit, waving to Izuku and waiting until he sat down as well to continue. "Shouto probably doesn't know how to ask for help, how to rely on others. Objectively he may know that you both want to help, but he doesn't think you can. We need to show him that we will be there for him no matter what and that he *can* ask us for help."

Scoffing, the blonde dropping his head into his hands and leaned onto his elbows, scrubbing away at the tears in his eyes. "And we do that by fucking ignoring the problem all together?"

"No," Inko sighed, shaking her head. "We do that by being there for him and we do that by figuring out what we *can* do. Like I said, without proof and without Shouto willing to testify, I don't think there's a lot we can do. Especially with Endeavor being a hero. We can try to look into what legal routes we can take, but until we figure that out, then we'll need to do what we can right now."

"Which... is to just be there for him," Izuku clarified, scrubbing away at his own tears.

Inko nodded and forced a smile onto her face. "Exactly. Tell him he can come over here anytime he wants, keep him after school for training or offer to meet him early for breakfast. Anything to keep him from being at home where he isn't safe. But," she said sternly, waiting until both boys looked at her to continue, "you *have* to be careful. We don't know the details of what's happening. You have to be careful not to put Shouto in more danger okay? Don't confront Endeavor again,

don't threaten him or keep Shouto if it looks like he *has* to leave okay? We need to be there for him, but not at the expense of his safety. Okay?"

She drew them both into a tight, tear-stained hug when they both nodded and she vowed to do everything in her power to stop whatever was going on in the Todoroki household.

Even if she had to go up against the number two hero herself.

Nobody hurts her kids.

Chapter End Notes

> Man guys I have SO MANY PLANS for this story and more just keep coming. OMG. I'm so glad you're all liking it and hope you're in for the long haul because I expect this to be a long road trip. Looks like we're back on our angst train for a little while, so umm... sorry? But like, you know your girl loves some angst.
>
> Also I'm totally aware that I flipped Natsuo and Fuyumi's ages, but I'm too lazy to go back and I like the idea that Natsuo is older. So don't @ me please. I'm aware of the fact lol

Chapter 17: Disrespect

Chapter Summary

> Izuku wins a race, the boys have a *talk*, and the author uses way too many italics.

Chapter Notes

> So I low-key hate the beginning of this chapter, but I had a lot of little things I wanted to get done before the end of the chapter so I hope it still flows okay.
>
> SPOILERS for Touya if you don't already know who that is.
>
> TRIGGER WARNINGS:
> - Mentions of abuse and minor character death (in the past)
> - burning

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The day of the sports festival came quicker than any of them truly imagined, and with it came the chaos.

People were crowding through the gates of the facility like a stampede of hungry sardines, pushing each other and screaming at each other. The heroes that were attending had their own entrance, and while it was calmer, it was no less busy, no less quiet.

Shinsou surprisingly found the crowds soothing, even if the entrance set aside for the students was almost barren in comparison. For the most part, the purple-haired boy wasn't really a people person. He enjoyed his pack, but outside of them, the only other person he even *liked* to talk to was Mr. Aizawa. Still, he enjoyed the anonymity that came with crowds. He enjoyed the fact that no one was looking at him strangely, no one knew who he was, and that… well that he wasn't alone.

He spent too much time locked away. Alone in the silence.

So the chaos around him was nice. Soothing. Or it should have been.

But something was prickling under his skin, tugging at the corners of his mind.

It felt hungry. Not in the ‘oh it’s lunchtime’ kind of hungry, but in the vicious, gnawing kind of hungry that would tear at the stomach after weeks of not eating. A dark sort of hunger that wasn’t his, but he could sense it on the air. Searching. Prowling. *Hunting*.

It set his nerves on edge and the hairs on the back of his neck stood up straight as he scanned the crowds for any sign of the threat.

Whatever it was, it felt like it wanted to eat him alive.

“Shinsou!”

Purple eyes snapped around to meet viridian and the boy found a small smile tugging at his lips as Izuku and Katsuki slipped through a part in the crowds and headed towards him, the former waving madly as if he hadn’t already gotten Shinsou’s attention. They both looked… well awful would have been too nice a word, but fit nicely with the dark circles under their eyes and the dark aura weighing heavy on Katsuki’s mind. Shouto was surprisingly not with them, which probably explained the blonde’s bad mood. If Shinsou focused enough, he knew he’d sense the argument they no doubt had. Sense the screaming and the pain. The *fear*.

He tried not to dig too deep into the minds of others if he could help it.

But Katsuki’s head was *so loud*.

“Sup, mind freak. You plannin’ on sleepin’ out here or are you gonna get out of the fucking way and let us inside?”

“A pleasure as always, Kaachan,” Shinsou sighed, though still he stepped forward to push the door of the student entrance open, holding it for both Midoriya’s.

“Fuckin- I did not give any of you permission to call me that,” the blonde grumbled angrily as he shoved past him.

Shinsou didn’t pay his words any mind. They’d been calling him that since the first time they heard Izuku say it. Kaminari had been the first, and ever since, it just sort of fit. In fact, Shinsou was pretty sure that Shouto was the only one who *didn’t* call him Kaachan. At least where the pack was confirmed. Even Izuku called him that, though it was Izuku’s nickname in the first place so it made sense-

A sharp knuckle tapped on his temple and Shinsou blinked up into

narrowed red eyes. Katsuki sneered at him. “Get out of your damn head, stupid. If you’re going to zone out all day, you might as well not even compete.”

“I’m fine,” was what he replied, though he wasn’t quite sure how true it was.

In retrospect, he probably was fine. But ever since he’d spoken with Auntie Hinko, he’d been a little bit *off*. She hadn’t told him everything, and he had a weird suspicion that she probably wouldn’t, but she’d told him enough to know that what he was feeling right now wasn’t exactly normal.

There were too many things pushing at his mind, especially as they entered the waiting room to see everyone else already waiting. There were too many things stabbing into him, too many thoughts that he could *almost* hear. The hunger. Katsuki’s anger. Katsuki’s guilt. Izuku’s guilt. Kaminari’s mindless ADHD rambling. Kirishima’s excitement. Everyone’s nerves.

It’s like his head was on fire and he didn’t know how to turn it off.

“Shinsou! My man! You okay? You look like you’re going to be sick.”

And then sunshine lit him up and the voices in him became muffled and distant, like he could only focus on the glow of yellow eyes in front of him. Kaminari was wearing his normal hero get-up, though his visor was pushed up onto his head, holding his bangs out of his face in a look that Shinsou was *not* ready for this early in the morning, and he had some sort of bulky metal contraption on one of his arms that he didn’t recognize.

But his smile was blinding and it served to push away all the thoughts that threatened to consume him.

It helped him breathe.

“I’m okay,” he told the boy, trying to give him a smile. “Just overwhelmed.”

“Oh yeah I can get that,” the blonde grinned, waving towards Katsuki and Izuku as they fucked off somewhere near where Kirishima was hyping up the others. “I’m so nervous! But like, also excited, you know? I mean, I know I’m not going to win, hell I’ll be lucky if I even make it to the one v. one’s, but man I’m stoked!”

Shinsou's eyebrows tugged together and he frowned. "Why wouldn't you make it?"

Kaminari laughed and shrugged, rubbing the back of his neck in that adorable way he did when he was caught off guard by a question. "Well you know! I overuse my quirk once and I'm down for the count. Izuku made me this cool support gear, though," he said, raising his arm to show off the metal gauntlet thing. "It helps me focus and aim my lightning better with magnetic targets and stuff. It'll only get me so far, but it's still pretty cool, right?" Kaminari shrugged, like he wasn't downgrading himself right before the biggest event of the year. "It's okay, though. I'm not too worried about it. There are plenty of other people stronger than me that deserve to win! I'm just going to do my best!"

And Shinsou didn't like that.

He didn't like the way Kaminari always talked about himself like he wasn't good enough to even be there. He'd been noticing it a lot more lately- well… he'd been noticing *Kaminari* a lot more recently, so it made sense. Still, he noticed how insecure the boy was about himself and Shinsou hated it.

"You're kidding right," he asked, almost reveling in the adorably confused look that spread over the blonde's face.

"Hah?"

Shinsou rolled his eyes, mostly as an excuse to glance away from that face and to hide the soft rush of blood he could feel in his own cheeks. "Kami, you're one of the most powerful people in this class. You could easily win the sports festival if you wanted to. Do you have any idea how incredibly powerful lightning is?"

His question was met with silence, and something in his gut worried that he'd said something wrong, but when he glanced back, those gold eyes were wide and filled with confused wonder. "I mean yeah, but I can't control it-" he started, only stopping when Shinsou shrugged his shoulders and shoved his hands in his pockets.

"So? You're a first year student and we were barely allowed to mess with our quirks as children. You'll learn control, you just need practice," Shinsou said as if it was the most obvious thing in the world. Because it was. "Lightning is a force of nature, Kaminari. It's deadly, if used correctly. It could even save lives if you could control the output. Being able to control electricity is incredible and you

should be proud of your quirk. You have incredible control over it considering the fact that it's a volatile substance in the first place."

Heat rushed to his cheeks again when he realized what he'd said and he had to glance away to avoid the shocked look on the blonde's face. He didn't want to think about the way the other boy was blushing, or how his plush lips were hanging open, or how he wanted nothing more than to press the boy up against the wall and *show* him how much he enjoyed his quirk-

Okay wow. Not right now you idiot. Let's move on here…

"I um…" He coughed, running a hand through his messy hair and gestured towards the pack off-handedly. "I gotta go… talk to… someone about a thing. Good luck. I guess."

Good job, Shinsou. Very articulate.

He was so fucked.

Twenty minutes before the first trial of the festival, the students were all led into a large hallway and Katsuki couldn't see a hint of red and white hair for the life of him. He knew Shouto was there. He'd seen him come into the waiting room only minutes before they'd hustled all the students along to the new location. But that's as much of a look as he got.

He didn't even see him when he was on stage, declaring to the whole stadium that he was going to win.

He looked fine, from what Katsuki could see. There was no new fog around him, no visible wounds or anything to show that something had happened the night before. Which was a relief, he supposed. But it still set his fox on edge when the moment they locked eyes, Shouto had turned and walked away.

"It's okay," Izuku assured him with a hand on his shoulder. "Remember what mom said. He needs to come to us."

And Katsuki *knew* that. He did. But the *thing* inside him didn't. And it hated it.

A hesitant touch on the blonde's shoulder drew his attention away from the crowd and down towards his side where Shinsou was standing. He hadn't even noticed the purple-haired freak walk up, had

no idea how he even managed to shove through this suffocating crowd. But there he was, his brow crinkled in some weird mix of confusion and consideration, like he could sense something Katsuki couldn't but he wasn't sure what.

Right, he scolded himself. He was supposed to ask about the weird shit.

"Remember what I said," Shinsou told him quietly, interrupting whatever Katsuki was about to say, and the blonde grunted in question. Purple eyes met red and Katsuki felt his hackles rise a bit at the serious look. "On Wednesday, at the barbeque. Remember what I told you."

Katsuki frowned. "About the fox?"

He nodded and Katsuki found himself almost *wanting* to agree, like he trusted Shinsou in whatever it was he wasn't telling him. "Don't use it during the festival. This whole thing is going to be televised and if the wrong… *eyes* see you," he said, carefully avoiding the word 'person', "then you could be putting yourself in danger."

Katsuki scoffed. "Fuckin' let 'em try."

"Okay fine," Shinsou sighed, rolling his eyes. "Let me try this a different way then. If the wrong eyes see you for what you really are, then you're putting the *rest of us* in danger."

And as much as Katsuki hated to admit it, the words had their desired effect. Instantly the fox inside him went on high alert. He slipped into protective mode as if it were a second skin. Still, he couldn't let Shinsou know just how easily he was ready to give in. So he sneered and pretended to think about it a moment before grunting. "Fine, but on one condition." Shinsou raised an eyebrow beside him and Katsuki's sneer tilted into a smirk. "When the festival is over, you're telling me everything."

Eyebrows rose and Katsuki knew without an answer that Shinsou would agree. He still felt the need to press.

"Don't play dumb," he started, turning his eyes back in front of them and keeping his voice low. "I'm not stupid. I've picked up on stuff too. You may be subtle to the others, but not to me. The fact that you even know about me is suspicious in itself, and I suspect you know a lot more than you're letting on," he said. Shinsou shifted beside him and Katsuki spared him a glare. "So when this is over, you and me are

gonna sit down and you're gonna tell me everything. Deal?"

A sigh.

"Deal."

Izuku won the race.

How he won the first race, he didn't know. Well he did know, logically. Obviously. He'd done it. But still, *he'd done it.* He had won the first part of the sports festival all on his own! He didn't even use a single support item, just his brain. Just his strategy. True, it'd taken him a little while to catch up, and using the mines was definitely a gamble… but he'd done it! He'd done it!

The proud look that Kaachan gave him made his heart flutter in his chest like a butterfly. The small smile that Shouto sent his way from across the open arena drowned out the cheers from the crowd around them.

He couldn't believe he'd won.

The excitement, unfortunately, didn't last as long as he'd like it to have.

Because winning the first round apparently came with a price tag on his head. Literally.

"Get on my team," Kaachan had said immediately once they'd figured out what the next challenge was. There was a manic sort of grin on his face, an excitement in his eyes at the prospect of winning, and really… really, Izuku hated to crush that excitement. But-

"Kaachan I can't."

His nose scrunched up in confusion and Izuku pouted. "Kaachan! I have to do this on my own! If I get on your team, or on Shouto's team, then people are going to think that I just won because of you guys. I have to show them that I'm not relying on the powerhouses of the class and that I can stand my own without my quirk!"

"That's dumb," Katsuki growled, though Izuku could tell he was pouting because the shorter boy was right. "You won the first round, they already know you can do it."

"They'll think it's dumb luck," Izuku said, because even *he* thought it

was a little bit of dumb luck. Honestly, that shouldn't have even worked. Still, he shoved a challenging grin on his lips and raised up slightly until he was just a breath away from the blonde. He wanted nothing more than to kiss him, but he couldn't, not in front of all these people. "What's wrong, *Kaachan?* Afraid I'm going to beat you? Aren't up for the challenge?"

It was low handed, Izuku knew that. Kaachan was so easy to rile up that it was almost sad, but Izuku always managed to use that information to his advantage. And right now, that advantage was winning this on his own terms.

"Oh you little shit," the Kitsune sneered, knowing exactly what it was Izuku was doing but unable to stop it. "Fuckin' fine. You want a challenge, you've got one. But be careful because I ain't going easy on you, small fry."

"I wouldn't expect you to."

And with that, they parted.

Izuku was glad that Kaachan was in a better mood this morning. Or well… he wasn't *really*, but he hadn't seemed to hold onto whatever anger he had for Izuku the night before. And while what he said had hurt, and there was no excuse for him treating Izuku like that, he did get it. He knew that Katsuki's spirit was strange, that it made him feel things that Izuku couldn't. He knew the blonde struggled with it every day, and that being hit full force with Endeavor and the trauma and Shouto all at once, and then having to leave him there, was no doubt tearing him apart.

So Izuku didn't hold a grudge that night. He didn't hold a grudge when Katsuki was the one to crawl into his bed that night to sleep. He didn't hold a grudge the next morning when Katsuki used all the hot water and cackled like he'd done it on purpose. He didn't hold a grudge when Katsuki pushed him up against their bedroom door and kissed the life out of him moments before they had to leave.

And, unfortunately, he didn't hold a grudge when Katsuki beat him during the second round.

But that was mostly because of his shock at seeing unfamiliar flames dancing across Shouto's left side.

Shouto had taken Izuku's headband, making himself the new target and inadvertently drawing Katsuki's attention. Their teams came head

to head, the tension in the air so thick that Izuku could taste it. He could only imagine what Katsuki was tasting. They didn't speak, but Katsuki still didn't hesitate before aiming an explosion in their boyfriend's direction. And then there they were. It was only for a moment, just a brief flicker of embers and flames that disappeared as fast as they'd come, but they were there. Bright and beautiful and intoxicating.

And just distracting enough for Katsuki to hesitate long enough for the buzzer to go off.

Shouto had won.

But he didn't look like he had.

"He looked so angry," Shouto whispered later, when they'd been given a break between events and the taller boy had dragged Izuku off into an abandoned hallway to talk. "He just looked so upset with me and- and I panicked. I don't even remember *thinking* about activating my flames, they just- they just did."

The fear in Shouto's voice was thick, like he was afraid of his own flames, and Izuku wondered briefly if… if maybe he was.

"He's worried about you," Izuku tells him, voice just as quiet. "We both are. We know you're hurting, and you're only making it worse for yourself by not using your fire-"

"I *can't*," Shouto argued, dragging his hands through his hair and leaning back against the wall. "You don't get it, Izuku. This fire- it's *his* and I don't want any part in it. Not after everything he's done. After everything his fire has done."

Hesitant, Izuku reached out his hands and tugged the other boy's hands out of his hair gently. "Shouto… I know you haven't told us what happened. Kaachan knows some of it, but not all of it and he never told me. But, you know it wasn't *you* who did those things, right?" Heterochromic eyes widened and Shouto looked like he wanted to step back if the wall wasn't behind him. Izuku pressed on while the silence was still palpable. "The things that happened- whatever they were- *you* weren't the one who did them. You may both have fire quirks, but it's not *your* quirk that hurt you, or whoever else got hurt. It wasn't your hands that held you down or burned you. This fire isn't his, Shouto. It's yours. You have to know that."

"It killed my brother."

The words were like a stab through the heart and Izuku blinked away the sudden tears that prickled at his eyes. “What?”

“My brother,” Shouto said again, his eyes staring off over Izuku’s shoulder with that dead sort of expression, his voice barely above a whisper. “I can barely remember him, I was so little… but he protected me when he could. Made dad train with him instead of me. He- I know you remember when Katsuki brought him up. Said that dad didn’t stop with him.”

Izuku swallowed. “Endeavor- he killed him?”

Shouto shrugged. “Might as well have. Touya was the first born in a quirk marriage,” he explained, the term not unknown to Izuku, and he knew it was illegal as well. “He was supposed to be the strongest hero, supposed to surpass even All Might. And he was strong. His flames were so hot, burned even hotter than Endeavor’s,” Shouto explained. And slowly, very slowly, he raised his hand between them, letting the smallest of flames flicker to life in his palm. “Hotter than mine ever will.”

“What happened?”

“He was born with my father’s quirk, but my mother’s body,” Shouto mumbled, eyebrows tugging together like he didn’t quite understand it himself either. “His quirk, it burned him if he used it too much. His flames were too hot for his own body to handle. But *he* didn’t care,” Shouto spat. “He didn’t care. He figured Touya could push past it, could learn to make it work for him even though his skin was literally burning itself off.” Bile rose in Izuku’s throat at the explanation, but he swallowed it down, fingers tightening around the hand he still held and feeling Shouto squeeze back. “Dad said it was an accident. He told the police that Touya had an episode and lost control of his quirk and it burnt him up from the inside out.”

Izuku had a feeling that wasn’t what really happened, but he didn’t interrupt.

Shouto took a deep breath and clenched his fist, extinguishing the flame he’d conjured. “But Touya was only training because I was hurt. He shouldn’t have been training. He’d been doing it for hours and hours every day that whole week. And dad was angry that I was too sick to fight. He made Touya train for over 32 hours without stopping.” He took a deep breath, then let it out. “We barely made it out of the house in time. When the flames were finally put out, Touya

was no where to be found."

"Shouto-"

"Mom took it the hardest I think," he continued, his voice almost insistent, like he had to get this all out now or he wouldn't be able to speak of it again. So Izuku shut his mouth and waited. "What he did- what she lost… it broke her. A few months after it happened, she finally snapped. She said I looked too much like him on my left side, that it was hard to even look at me anymore without seeing- without seeing *him*," he spat, raising a hand to brush through his red hair. "So she took the tea kettle off the stove and dumped it over my face."

This time, Izuku couldn't stop the tears from streaming down his cheeks. Shouto watched them, brushing them away with his thumb, though his expression didn't change.

"Dad put her in a mental hospital after that," he mumbled. "I was back to training the next day."

"Shouto," Izuku choked, raising his own hand to cup the left side of the boy's face. "Shouto that doesn't mean-"

But he shook his head and dropped it until his forehead was pressed against Izuku's. "Every time I look at my flame, all I see is Touya's face. All I see is my mom apologizing. My sister crying and my dad-" his voice cracked and he struggled to take a breath. "My dad telling me that I had to be stronger. All I see is *him*."

Izuku didn't know what to do after that. He didn't know what to say to show Shouto that it wasn't true. That Endeavor's flames were disgusting and Shouto's were beautiful. He didn't know what to tell him to make him see what he and Katsuki saw.

"You're not him, Shouto," he tried, knowing the boy wouldn't believe him. He rose to his toes to press a tear-stained kiss against soft lips. "You're so, so much better."

"You. *Boy*."

Katsuki's mind was still reeling from what he'd over heard. His heart was still aching from Shouto's story, his skin still screaming at the memory and the context he now held for it. He had wanted nothing more than to rush forward and gather Shouto in his arms, to steal him away from that house and hide him in a den where no one would ever

find him.

He blamed his anger on why he hadn't noticed the stench of coal and gasoline wafting towards him. Why he couldn't feel the heat and the anger radiating from the man behind him.

Katsuki turned.

Endeavor was even more intimidating in his full hero costume, his flames licking up around his hair and his face in that *stupid* fucking flaming facial hair he wore. He had his arms crossed over his massive chest and his piercing blue eyes were like missiles heading straight for Katsuki.

The pro stopped a few feet away and Katsuki was struggling to breathe. Struggling not to turn tail and run. Struggling not to unclench his fist and dig his claws as deep into the man's jugular as he could. He kept his mouth shut for fear of the animalistic growl building in his chest, but Endeavor didn't seem to care.

"You and Shouto are the most powerful children here," the man began, and if he was anyone else in the world, Katsuki might have preened at the compliment. "You will both make it to the finals today. You will beat everyone else and in the end, it will be you against my son."

"If you're here to tell me to throw the match-" Katsuki spat between his teeth, almost shocked at the angry and offended look the man gave him.

"You will do no such thing," Endeavor warned. And it *was* a warning. Katsuki could tell in the way he said it, in the way his shoulders squared and his jaw raised slightly. Intimidating the teenager. "You will fight him harder than you've ever fought anyone else," the man said. No, *ordered*. "Shouto is holding back right now, he is being *weak*. He won't beat you with just one side of his quirk. If you want an honorable win, then you will make him use his left side."

Honorable? "You have the fucking right to tell me what's *honorable?*" Katsuki seethed, jaw twitching and shoulders rolling as he fought against his fox. "How *fucking* dare you, you piece of garbage-"

"Watch your tone with me, boy." Another warning. Another *threat*. Endeavor took a step forward, looming over Katsuki like a mountain. Dangerous. Frightening. "You are a *child*, and I'll not allow you to speak to me in disrespect. And I will not allow you to disrespect my

son by allowing him to fight handicapped." The word drew Katsuki up short and he blinked at the man as he continued. "Do not disgrace him by going easy on him. Make him use his fire. Make him *fight*."

And Katsuki was *pissed*.

Because Endeavor was right. The fact was sour in his throat, but he couldn't deny it.

If it did end up being him and Shouto in the final round, then Shouto wouldn't use his fire. Katsuki knew he wouldn't. He'd rely on his ice like he always did. It'd been *months* and during that second trial was the first time Katsuki had even *seen* Shouto's fire. The boy hated it, probably more than he hated his father.

But Katsuki also knew that Shouto wouldn't win without it. He wouldn't. He and Katsuki were so evenly matched, it's why they worked so well together. But Shouto's ice didn't usually hold up against Katsuki's explosions, and Katsuki could handle the effect of his quirk longer than Shouto could. He had better stamina and his quirk only grew stronger the more he exerted himself.

The only way Shouto could win would be with his fire, because Katsuki could fight back against ice. But he had no defense against fire.

He was conflicted. Because no matter what, Katsuki was unhappy with the issue at hand. No matter what, he lost.

If Shouto used his fire, they'd be giving into what Endeavor wanted. If he didn't, then he was not only going *easy* on Katsuki, but he was castrating himself from his true potential. His true power.

No matter what, Katsuki lost.

But, in the long run, that wasn't what mattered was it?

"You don't get it," the teen mumbled after a moment of consideration. When he glanced up, Endeavor was staring at him with a mix of anger and disgust, like he couldn't believe he had to stand there in Katsuki's presence as long as he was. The stench of sulfur sat heavy under the gas and coal, and Katsuki's nose wrinkled with it. "You just don't. *fucking. Get. It.* Shouto is amazing," Katsuki told him, his fists clenching at his sides and something in his chest solidifying with his words. "He is a better hero than you'll ever be and he's only *fifteen*. He works *so hard*," Katsuki emphasized, "to be better than you and he

doesn't even realize that he already is. Because you're garbage. You're a huge, flaming heap of literal garbage, and Shouto is the fucking sun. Don't you see that?"

The pro's face twisted up in confused anger, but Katsuki couldn't stop now that he'd started.

"God, he's so fucking worried about turning into you that he won't even use his *quirk*! What the hell does that tell you, huh?" The teen spat, taking a brave step forward as he glared up at the man. "You try so fucking hard to be as good as All Might. You try so hard to be *better*, but here you are threatening a *child*. You're standing here, telling me that your son's emotions and feelings aren't valid and that he's *weak*, when really he's one of the strongest people I've ever met. And one day, he's going to surpass you, and he's going to surpass All Might, and it's going to be because of *him*. Not you. Not because some selfish, egotistical, bastard of a father decided to abuse him-"

His words were cut off with a strangled noise as a thick, burning hand wrapped around his throat, the other grabbing onto Katsuki's wrist, stopping his incoming punch with one motion. Katsuki kicked his legs out but couldn't find the ground beneath his feet. Couldn't find purchase until he reached out and planted his boots against Endeavor's stomach, just enough to relieve some of the suffocating pressure on his neck.

God, he could smell his skin *burning*.

"You better watch yourself boy. Those are some bold accusations you're throwing."

"Fuck. You." Katsuki spat, the spittle from his lips steaming when it landed on the older man's face. Katsuki bore his sharpened teeth at the man, digging his claws into the wrist that held him up.

In an instant, the air grew cold and dangerous. Endeavor just barely managed to pull away in time to dodge an icicle aimed for his arm, and Katsuki dropped hard on to the ground, his knees aching in protest and no doubt threatening to bruise. He choked out a cough, his lungs aching as he desperately gasped for air, a pair of small hands reaching out to keep him steady.

"Don't *touch* him," Shouto's voice rang out through the air, and Katsuki tensed. Fuck… how much did he hear?

"Shouto. Still using your ice I see. Pathetic."

“You’re done,” Katsuki croaked, red eyes glaring up at Endeavor and he gave a manic sort of grin. “You’re fucking done, you hear me?” He lurched forward, only to have Izuku hold him back. He snapped his teeth at the pro. “You lay one more hand on Shouto, you even *look* at him wrong after today, and I’m telling everyone.”

Endeavor didn’t look bothered, but Katsuki didn’t care because he wasn’t bluffing.

“Katsuki-“

The blonde shoved himself to his feet, leaning heavily on Izuku’s shoulder. He grabbed the back of Shouto’s shirt and tugged him until he could place himself between the other boy and his father. He jabbed a finger at the pro and grinned. “You don’t take me seriously, but I am. You fucking hurt him one more goddamn time and I will ruin your entire career. You understand me?”

Endeavor was silent, as if he was parsing whether or not to believe the young fox. Katsuki couldn’t tell what he decided, but the pro snorted and rolled his eyes until they landed on Shouto. “I expect you to win, today, Shouto. And I expect you to do it with your fire.”

And then he was gone, the only reminder that he'd ever been there being the handprints burnt into Katsuki's skin.

Chapter End Notes

> Whew, what a trip. I would apologize for all the angst, but it's needed and I love it so. *shrug* Hope you guys are enjoying everything! We'll get back to fluff soonish, but I make no promises. Hehe.
>
> Once again thank you all for the amazing comments! I'm so glad everyone is liking this so much! I can't wait to write more!
>
> And for those of you wondering at the end of this chapter, YES, Momma Inko is still going to get her moment with Endeavor.

Chapter 18: Ignite

Chapter Summary

> Katsuki is a simp and a poet.
> That's it, that's the chapter.

Chapter Notes

> And we're coming to the end of the sports festival everyone! I'm glad you're all enjoying this story! I have so much planned that I am just *itching* to get to.
>
> No trigger warnings here other than maybe some very brief mentioning of Endeavor's trash parenting.
>
> Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The burns on Katsuki's throat were pretty bad. Bad enough that they might leave a scar if he didn't take care of them correctly, at least that's what Shouto told him. And they hurt like a motherfucking *bitch*. But still, he refused to go to Recovery Girl for help. He didn't want them healed. He wanted Endeavor to look at him and see a *threat* every time he saw those marks. He wanted Endeavor to know that Katsuki was ready to tear his life out from between his ribs for Shouto if needed. He wanted Shouto to know that he would do whatever it took to protect him.

So instead, they spent the rest of their time in the private rooms waiting to be called for their respective turns. Izuku had been called first for his round against Shinsou. The television screen on the far side of the room was showing the fight. He figured it'd take a while since Izuku was smart enough not to respond so Shinsou had to resort to using his hand-to-hand skills and his capture cloth. It was going to be a long fight between support items.

Katsuki was sat atop the table, his head tilted back painfully as Shouto stood between his legs, gently rubbing burn cream across his jugular.

It hurt, but the pain was nothing compared to how he'd felt the night before after leaving Shouto there alone.

"Stop squirming," the dual-haired hero sighed, pressing his fingers

painfully into the palm shaped burn, making Katsuki flinch at the contact. “You’re the one who threatened a pro-hero. I think you can handle a little bit of pain.”

The fox snorted and rolled his eyes. “Bitch had it coming. And for once, this wasn’t my fault,” he countered, glaring down his nose at his boyfriend. “He came after *me*, I’ll have you know. And now he knows we’ll stand up for you. He can’t hide behind his big bad persona anymore because I’m not fuckin’ scared of him.”

“You should be.”

Shouto’s voice was quiet, his head tilted down as his cold hands rested on Katsuki’s shoulders. He looked so distraught as he stared at the burn on Katsuki’s throat, like it was tearing him up inside and Katsuki was immediately reminded of what he’d overheard Izuku and Shouto talking about before Endeavor had shown up.

With a sigh, Katsuki slowly and carefully lowered his head, fingers reaching up to press against Shouto’s chin and raise his gaze away from the wound.

“This wasn’t your fault,” he said softly.

“You were literally sticking up for *me,* Katsuki. How is this not my fault?”

“Hey, look at me,” the blonde ordered, softening his gaze when those blue and brown eyes met his. “If you rescued someone and got hurt in the process, would you blame them for your injury?”

Shouto’s face twisted up and his hand wrapped around Katsuki’s wrist, not pulling him away but just holding. “That’s not-“

“It is,” he interrupted, tilting Shouto’s chin up more when he tried to look away again. “It’s the same. I will always stick up for you Shouto. I will always protect you from anyone who tries to hurt you. You don’t get to take that away from me, you hear? Izuku and I, hell, even Shitty Hair and the others. We’re all a pack, okay? You pesky little mortals might not understand what that means as much as I do, but packs are for life.” At least that’s what Auntie Hinko had told him. Shouto snorted at the ‘pesky mortal’ thing, and Katsuki considered it a win. “We protect each other. We will *always* protect each other.”

Shouto watched him for a while, trying to gauge the truthfulness of his words probably, and Katsuki let him. This was important, he

needed to be patient.

A loud cheer from the crowd on the t.v. broke through the silence and with it, Shouto sighed, dropping his head onto Katsuki's shoulder like it weighed more than he could bare. "I'm tired, Katsuki. I'm so tired of fighting him. Of fighting you. And I know if- if I let you have your way and we do something about this, then I'm just going to have to keep fighting. Fighting him, fighting the court, fighting the rumors and the tabloids and the media." There was a hitch in the boy's breath and Katsuki shifted to wrap his good arm around Shouto's shoulders, digging his fingers into the boy's hair and pretending to ignore the wet spot growing on his shirt. "I've been fighting my whole life, Katsuki, and I just want to rest."

"Then show him you're done," the blonde whispered. He knew he had to choose his next words carefully. Knew that what he wanted to say, what he wanted tell him, was going to either go really bad, or really good. He could only hope for the latter. "Show him that you're done fighting him, that you're done fighting *yourself*."

His boyfriend raised his head quickly, eyes widened in surprise and confusion. "You want me to give in? To use my fire?"

"I want you to stop tearing yourself apart," Katsuki said instead. "I want you to admit that you're more than his quirk, and you're more than *him*. Be better than him. Use his fire better than he ever has. I want people in the distance to see that flame and think it's *you* behind it, not him. Let him fade out of existence," Katsuki told him, raising his hands to frame that beautiful face. "Make people remember *your* name and *your* fire. Hell, make them remember your ice too. But don't let him think he created you. Take what you have, and create yourself."

Tears were forming in Shouto's eyes again and Katsuki swiped a thumb across his cheek the moment they fell, brushing them away and searching for something, *anything*, in the other boy's eyes that told him he was getting through to him.

"When did you become so wise?" Shouto croaked, clenching his jaw as he tried to reign in his emotions.

Katsuki couldn't help the laugh that burst from him and he rolled his eyes. "Somewhere between meeting Izuku and falling for you," he said easily, grinning when Shouto hit him in the shoulder.

"Haha, very funny. Now, we've had your stupid heart to heart,"

Shouto mumbled, pulling back and pulling himself together. “Will you sit still now so that I can finish your neck?”

They spent the rest of Izuku’s fight in silence, but it wasn’t uncomfortable anymore. It wasn’t filled with tension or anxiety. It was soft and loving, a warm summer’s breeze settling through their veins. By the time the match was over and Izuku had won, Katsuki’s wrist and throat were bandaged and mostly hidden under the high collar of his festival uniform. Easy enough to brush off to most people if asked.

“Hey,” Katsuki mumbled when they pulled away from each other. He took Shouto’s hand in his and pulled him back, just close enough to brush their lips together. “We’re okay, right? You know I wouldn’t force you to use your fire if you really didn’t want to. I- I may be an asshole but-“

“I know,” Shouto whispered, moving his hand down to clasp the kitsune’s. “And I don’t want to, but- but you have some good points. I don’t think it’s something I will be able to get over so quickly. And I can’t make any promises but… but I’ll try, and… and maybe we can think about telling someone. About- about um… pressing charges or something. But just- just not yet, okay?”

“Okay.”

And the way Shouto kissed him then was like heaven in Katsuki’s mouth. His hands were so gentle in Katsuki’s spikey hair, his lips so soft against his own. The taller boy had long ago lost his hesitance in kissing, though this time was different than usual. Because usually Katsuki led. Usually it was hungry and vicious and teeth and tongue and *need*. With bodies pressing up against walls and tables and doors. But this time was softer, hungrier but in its own way. Shouto didn’t hold him like he was breakable, he wouldn’t dare, but more like Katsuki was something so incredibly precious that he didn’t deserve to touch at all. Instead of pushing him up against anything, he was pulling him closer, pressing their bodies together as if they could merge into one soul.

And fuck, kissing Shouto like this was like a drug. He felt high off of it, his mind fuzzy and body loose as he all but slumped forward into the other boy. He could do this all day.

A sharp wolf-whistle sliced through the room, followed by a loud cheer, and Katsuki was forced to pull away from those intoxicating lips. He turned his sluggish attention towards the door and glared at

the gaggle of pack members standing there with dumb grins on their faces. Izuku was in the front, his eyes wide and face a bright red, and standing in the back, looking just about as done as he could *possibly* be, was Mr. Aizawa.

“Does this mean you guys aren’t getting a divorce?”

The other matches went by quickly.

Shouto took out Sero with barely a blink of the eye- using his ice of course- and Katsuki went up against Uraraka. And wasn’t *that* a fight to watch. Shouto and Izuku were on the edges of their seats the entire time, both struggling to see through the dust and the smoke, relying heavily on Hatsume beside them to tell them what was even happening. The moment people started booing Katsuki, Izuku was ready to throw hands. He might have too, if Mr. Aizawa hadn’t chimed in to correct them. To show them that Katsuki wasn’t bullying the girl, but respecting her.

“That was impressive,” Shouto breathed once the fight was over and Uraraka was being carried off the field. The air in the stadium was hot and stuffy, dust settling heavy in it and making it a bit difficult to breathe, but the crowd was cheering and Katsuki had won.

“Her strategy was actually really smart,” Izuku rushed to say, already tugging his notebook out to start writing things down. He’d been doing it all day, waiting until after each round or fight to write down his observations. Shouto thought it was cute. “She knew she wouldn’t be able to get close to him and so she kept low to the ground, drew his attention away from where he needed it to be while taking advantage of how destructive Kaachan’s quirk is! I don’t even know if I would have thought about doing that! And she levitated all of those rocks for so long without getting sick! She’s getting really strong!”

Shouto hummed, a small smile on his lips as he listened to the greenette babble on about the possibilities of Uraraka’s quirk. (*“Especially if she can learn to control the gravity output! That has time travel potential you know!”)* After a few more minutes, Katsuki joined them again, dropping heavily into the chair next to Shouto to watch the rest of the fights.

Kirishima and TetsuTetsu’s fight went on for far longer than Shouto would have liked, and he admittedly fell asleep during part of it on Katsuki’s shoulder. (Which he apologized for once Kirishima finally made it back to them, all wrapped up like a mummy until the

rematch.) Katsuki didn't seem to mind, and Shouto could handle the gentle cooing and jeering from their friends at how cute they were. So it was fine.

He did notice however that about halfway through the tournament, just after his fight with Hatsume, Iida vanished from the stands and didn't return. It worried him slightly, as he and Izuku had become… friends, he supposed, with the boy. They didn't talk or hang out as much as Shouto did with the pack, but they were friendly enough. Shouto usually found the other boy in the library and they'd study together, or they spent times in the labs with Izuku since Iida's leg engines needed maintenance just like a support item did.

The announcement was that he dropped out due to a family emergency. Shouto hoped he was alright.

In the end, there were four competitors left and two fights: Shouto and Tokoyami, and Izuku and Katsuki. The crowd was going wild, everyone seemingly impressed that the greenette had made it to the finals only by using support items.

Shouto was impressed too. He didn't doubt the boy, but seeing him in action with his toys was another matter. Seeing him in his hero costume was another matter too.

Izuku had decided to go with something simple, and rather similar to Shinsou and Mr. Aizawa's jumpsuit. It was a dark green, with a cream coloured harness strapped over his shoulders, around his hips, and down his thighs to hold a multitude of pouches and items. His cream gloves went up to his elbows now, having worked hard with Hatsume to perfect the air cannon he now wielded, and his patented red sneakers were covered in dark metal bracers for stronger impact on his kicks, as well as speed. (Shouto remembered him saying something about the light weight metal and hidden boosters in them.) His visor was the same, slipping over his eyes like a pair of glasses, but it was tinted on the outside so no one else could see whatever Izuku was seeing. It was really all very impressive.

And Shouto had to admit it was pretty hot too. Katsuki agreed.

Even hotter however, was watching Katsuki and Izuku fight.

Shouto had watched them spar plenty of times, but quirks were never involved. At least, actual quirks weren't. He'd seen a few matches where Izuku would go up against Katsuki who shifted in and out of his fox form, but his explosions were never involved. So watching the

boys now as they went toe to toe, no holding back, was fascinating.

Izuku held up extremely well, using his wind gauntlets to lessen the blows of Katsuki's explosions, or to blow them away completely. And Izuku was fast, faster than Katsuki had ever been in his human form, so what Katsuki made up for in brute force, Izuku made up for in speed. Not to mention the fact that the boys *knew* each other. They knew how each other thought, how they fought, how their bodies moved. Izuku could plan Katsuki's moves faster than the blonde could decide on them, and Katsuki could sense Izuku's moves moments before they happened.

"Holy shit, they're incredible."

Shouto blinked out of his own stupor and turned slightly to see Shinsou sitting beside him. Kaminari was at his side, bobbing his head in agreement and next to him was a stunned Mina.

"They are," Shouto agreed. "I forget that you guys don't get to watch them spar as much as I do. This is different though."

"Izuku is doing so well! I heard some of the pros talking during the break," Mina said, leaning over Kaminari but not taking her eyes off the match, "and they thought it was unfair that Izuku had to go up against Kaachan. They figured that he must have a weak quirk since he was only using support items and that putting him up against someone as strong as Kaachan was just mean."

Kaminari snorted and shook his head. "Idiots. Izuku could probably destroy all of us if he tried hard enough and had enough time. That boy knows our quirks better than we do. He knows our weaknesses. Better pray that boy never goes dark side."

"Izuku is going to announce it at the end," Shouto told them, smirking slightly when they turned to look at him. "He asked Mr. Aizawa and Present Mic not to announce his quirk during the festival because he wanted to show people that he was strong before they knew the truth. He didn't want them to pity him first."

Shinsou bobbed his head. "Smart. Plus it sends a message. Reminds people that they need to not judge from the outside, or judge based on quirks."

Which, Shouto figured was the point.

In the end, Katsuki won. It was a close fight, with both boys growing

sluggish and tired. Shouto wasn't surprised it lasted as long as it did, but was surprised with how it ended. One well timed blast from the blonde and Izuku's gauntlet was shattered, out of commission for the rest of the fight. With it being his power house item it set him at a disadvantage, and Katsuki took full advantage of that. Izuku had other items of course, but they didn't hold up against the sheer firepower that was Katsuki's explosions.

Luckily, Izuku got out with minimal injuries, the worst of which was probably a concussion from hitting the wall with that last blast and some minor burns.

Even with losing however, he was a crowd favorite for making it that far without using a quirk.

Shouto's fight with Tokoyami was more challenging than he expected, but he managed it by consuming the boy in a ball of ice and simply shoving him out of bounds before Dark Shadow could break through.

It was a bit underhanded, but served its purpose.

And then there were two.

"Don't go easy on me," Katsuki ordered once he was finally face to face with Shouto on the arena floor. He grinned widely and cracked his knuckles in that way he knew the other boy hated. "Even if you don't use your fire, don't go easy on me. Got it, IcyHot?"

Shouto seemed to consider his words, feigning nonchalance before nodding. "Very well. Then don't go easy on me either. If you want to draw my fire out, then you better be willing to put up a good fight."

Oh fucking challenge accepted.

There was a split second after the bell rang and the fight was set to begin where Shouto's eyes slid off Katsuki's and found something behind his shoulder. The fox in him growled, but he kept the sound behind clenched teeth and ducked into a crouch, fingers already sparking. "Don't look at him," the blonde ordered, drawing Shouto's attention again. He didn't have to turn around to know who he was looking at. He could smell it in the air, like a burning dump in the distance. "Look at me, pretty boy. Fight *me*, not him."

So Shouto did.

It was easy to block out the cheering around them and the loud announcing from Present Mic. It was easy for the fox to focus solely on the pale boy in front of him.

What wasn't easy was ignoring how beautiful he looked mid-battle. Katsuki and Shouto had sparred before, but never going full out like this. Never long enough for frost to start tracing intoxicating designs across Shouto's skin. Not enough for little tufts of air to blow from between those blue-tinted lips.

Fighting him was like fighting Izuku. They were decently matched, moving around each other with familiar ease. The difference was, they were both holding back. They shouldn't have been, but they were. Katsuki wasn't using his fox, and Shouto still wasn't using his fire. Katsuki was sacrificing speed he needed to avoid the ice and Shouto was sacrificing the heat he needed to keep his temperatures even. The heat he needed to win.

"Son of a *bitch*," Katsuki snapped, not having moved quick enough to dodge the volley of icicles flying his way. He could feel the sting in his cheek where one had sliced across, feel the burn in his side where another had took a chunk out of him.

"You're distracted, Katsuki," Shouto called from the other side of the arena, a knowing smirk on his lips that had Katsuki wanting to kiss it off of him. "Care to share with the class what's got you unfocussed?"

Katsuki snorted and rolled to the side as another wall of ice came barreling his way. "Since when did you become a cocky bastard, huh?" He called out, though the words were accompanied with a huge grin.

Because despite everything that had happened recently, despite his worry and his anger and the pain… Katsuki was having *fun*. Fighting Kirishima and Izuku and Shouto? Even the bird guy? Being given permission to go all out, to show off, to *strut* was intoxicating to him. He was already excited, but going up against his boyfriends specifically was rolling something new through him that made his smile hard to wipe off.

It was so easy to fall into the ease of their movements, the ease of their banter and their careless flirting. Granted, he couldn't finish the fight with a well-timed roll of the hips or a teasing kiss like he wanted to, but *this* was familiar and exciting and he loved every second of it.

"And you're slowing down," he called back after a brief pause,

managing to let loose an explosion big enough to send the other boy flying, only stopping thanks to the wall of ice he built up behind his feet. “At this point you’ll freeze before I can even win!” It was a gentle nudge, a soft goading to get Katsuki what he wanted. He promised he wouldn’t push, and he wouldn’t, not if Shouto really didn’t want to use his fire… but he didn’t say anything about teasing.

Taking a gamble, the blonde let out a series of sharp explosions behind him, planting his feet on a sheet of ice in order to skate closer to his boyfriend. He didn’t stop, instead letting his body slam into Shouto’s and knocking them both to the ground. He just managed to grab the boy’s right wrist and pin it to the ground *hard*, the bones creaking under the pressure. He let the smoke from the explosions rise around them, blocking them completely from the crowds in the stands just long enough for Katsuki to press a sharp kiss to the boy’s freezing lips.

“Your lips are turning blue,” he whispered.

“*Katsuki*,” Shouto scolded, even as he raised slightly to chase the kiss.

But the blonde *tsked* and grinned before rolling off of him and just barely avoiding having his entire arm frozen. He cackled at the slightly offended look Shouto sent him and bounced on his feet. “Come on, pretty boy. Don’t I make you *hot*?”

A bright blush dusted across Shouto’s cheeks and he gawked at the blonde. “Katsuki! You can’t just- we’re in the middle of a *fight*, you can’t *flirt* with me!”

“Rule number one,” Katsuki smirked, using the boy’s flustered stance to duck around him and send him stumbling with a kick to the back. “Use all tools available to you. Besides, I thought you liked my flirting? It’s not like they can hear us up there,” Katsuki teased, wiggling his eyebrows as he dodged another punch.

It was obvious Katsuki was getting to the boy. His teeth were chattering and he was favoring his right wrist- no doubt sprained from Katsuki’s rough treatment of it- using his feet instead when he could. But Katsuki didn’t want the ice. He didn’t want Shouto to settle with losing- because Katsuki *would* win if it kept going like this. He wanted him to *fight*.

He let something soft settle over his features once the snow and dust cleared once more and they met gazes across from the debris. He knew Shouto could see it by the way he tensed.

A few moments of silence settled between them, and distantly Katsuki could hear Present Mic talking in the background. (*"Now it looks like they're just… staring at each other?")* But he didn't look away. Didn't dare. He had to show Shouto that he wasn't scared, that it was okay and that he was ready for it.

Come on.

Come on, baby, you can do it.

A grin spread across his face the instant he noticed Shouto give up. The instant the boy's shoulders slumped in defeat before he steeled himself and sucked in a deep, heavy breath.

The instant those burning heterochromic eyes flickered to life and Shouto finally, *finally*, let go.

Katsuki couldn't help but stare. The flames were gorgeous. Bright red and orange and white. Chaotic. Full of *life*. And though he didn't use them often, Shouto's control over the flames was incredible. Where his ice was hard and direct, the flames moved with the wind, with each shift of muscle and flick of a finger.

Watching Shouto use his ice was like watching a sculptor chisel away at stone, an ancient practice that he knew well enough that he could see a subject once and create wonder where rock had been. It came second nature to him, as easy as it was to speak, to breathe. But sculpting took discipline, concentration and quiet. Watching him use his fire was like a dance. The flame was its own creation, and Shouto was but it's master. Like music that Shouto had to bend his own body into to create something beautiful and in control.

They were exquisite, and Shouto used them in a way Endeavor never could.

He was all smooth lines and gentle motions, moving himself with the inferno instead of controlling it like his father did. Instead of forcing it to do his bidding, he asked.

Fuck, it was hot.

Really hot actually, too hot-

Katsuki got distracted. He shouldn't have, he'd already been scolded once for it, but it was hard not to do when there was a god in front of you, bending the elements to his will. Just a moment of hesitation was

all it took for the blazing inferno to scorch across his skin- and it was then he realized just how dangerous his own quirk could be… just how dangerous fighting Shouto's fire was.

His sweat ignited.

Shouto screamed.

And Katsuki couldn't help but think that his boyfriend's flames went so well with his explosions.

Chapter End Notes

> Soo, just for like, visual reference here. I imagine Shouto using his flames more like waterbending moves, whereas his dad uses more firebending moves. I want Shouto to move a lot more smoothly, like a dancer, whereas his dad is very strict and brute forcey. hopefully that came across well enough in the descriptions lol. Anyway! Thanks so much for all the love! Hope you liked this chapter and the cliffhanger.

Chapter 19: Little Monkey

Chapter Summary

Listen, just... a lot happens okay?

Chapter Notes

I have nothing to say XD I kind of hate the beginning of this chapter, but was super excited to get to the end, so sorry if it feels a little rushed.

Trigger warnings for violence and blood.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“I cannot believe I won on *accident*,” Katsuki growled from where he sat on the edge of the medical bed. He crossed his bandaged arms over his chest and glowered. “I wasn’t even *conscious*! How the hell do we call that a win? It should be a draw, like the shark teeth twins! I want a rematch!”

Shouto was sat in a chair in front of him, a few small bandages on his face and arms, but he was dirty with soot more than anything else. Izuku was perched on the bed beside Katsuki, one leg up on Shouto’s chair and the other kicking impatiently in front of him.

“You were still standing when the smoke cleared and Todoroki was past the line,” Mr. Aizawa sighed from the doorway, pinching the bridge of his nose to fend off a headache. “Technically, you didn’t pass out until after. Which makes you the winner and Todoroki the runner up.”

“Kaachan, I thought you’d be happy,” Izuku rolled his eyes, nudging his boyfriend in the ribs. “You won!”

“But I don’t remember winning!” He argued.

“But you still did,” Shouto chimed in with a small, hesitant smile. “It was technically your quirk that exploded and pushed me out of bounds. It was my own fault for falling for your goading. My ice never would have ignited your sweat. I should have seen that coming.” The blonde watched as something like surprise settled on Shouto’s face before the boy narrowed his eyes at him. “You tricked me.”

Which… what? “I did *not*! How the hell did I trick you?”

“You knew your sweat would ignite if I used my fire! You knew the blowback would be incredible,” Shouto argued, lips jutting out slightly in a pout. “And I fell right into your trap.” His voice dipped down into an almost whispered whine and Shouto glanced towards Izuku with wide eyes. “Is this… what betrayal feels like?”

Katsuki squawked, kicking his leg out to shove Shouto’s chair and forcing the now laughing boy to topple to the ground. “You think I *blew myself up* to beat you?” He cried, incredulous as Izuku started laughing with him. “You’re both fucking ridiculous! What the hell is happening right now? What am I doing? And you’re just standing over there watching them torture me!” He accused Aizawa who just sighed. “You’re a teacher, do something! This- this is bullying!”

“I think it’s called flirting,” the dark haired teacher said with a roll of the eyes, but still, he pushed himself to stand straight and bobbed his head. “Now, if you’re healed enough to tease each other, then you’re healed enough to get on stage. Let’s go. We still have to do the awards ceremony. The three of you are going to stand up there, get your medals, we’ll give some speeches, and then you can go off to the café where the after party is being held.” He paused in the hallway when the others followed him and turned his eyes down towards Izuku. “Did you want to give a speech, Midoriya, or were you planning on letting Nezu handle it?”

“Oh,” the greenette breathed, jumping slightly at the question. “Um- I didn’t even think- I kind of forgot I was going to do that. I think Principal Nezu can handle it. I’m sure he already has something thought up.”

Katsuki rolled his eyes, but still slung his good arm around Izuku’s shoulder as they started walking again, and nudged his temple with his nose. “You did good, bunny,” he whispered, making the younger boy jolt and turn his bright red face away from Katsuki. Shouto smiled beside him and nodded in agreement. With a snort, he smacked the hand over Izuku’s shoulder into Shouto’s and grinned. “And I guess you did alright too, IcyHot, but I still would’a beat you even if I didn’t blow up. We’ll do a rematch later.”

“I don’t think it’s possible for us to fight with my fire *without* you blowing up,” Shouto deadpanned.

Which… was probably true. As much as Katsuki definitely wanted to

go up against that fire again.

All Might and Midnight were waiting for them when they'd gotten to the underground podiums, and the latter showed them up to where they were meant to stand- Katsuki on the highest in first place, Shouto in second, and Izuku in third. They're given gentle reminders to smile (mostly pointed towards Katsuki who already has a scowl on his face at the prospect of having to sit through more speeches) and then the ground begins to move. Above them, the stadium floor parts and the dais that they're standing on rises and rises until it jerks to a stop. The other students around the arena circle the podiums cheering, the guests and heroes in the audience going absolutely wild.

It felt like a whole *thing* and Katsuki couldn't help the proud grin that beamed across his face, so drastically cocky compared to Izuku's flustered expression and Shouto's lack of one.

"I present to you, our winners of this year's annual UA Sports Festival!" Midnight cries out, thrusting her arm out dramatically and making the crowd explode again in excitement. It was all way too fuckin' much for Katsuki, but it needed to be done so he rolled his eyes and waited it out. The woman announced their names and their places as All Might stepped forward with his awards, looking a bit sheepish and uncomfortable as he placed the metal around Izuku's neck.

The greenette didn't even look at the man.

"And our first place winner, Midoriya Katsuki!"

"Don't you touch me," he growled as All Might stepped up towards him, his eyes were narrowed in warning, ignoring the wide eyed expression the number one hero gave him. Instead, he reached out and snatched the award from the man's hand and put it on himself. "I'll do it myself."

No one in the crowd seemed to notice Katsuki's hostility, but All Might looked put out, so he counted it as a win and Izuku was pouting like he always did when Katsuki was being petty.

"What a wonderful festival this year!" The arena hushed as Principal Nezu took his place on the dais in front of Katsuki, a microphone held in one of his hands and notecards held in the other- not that he used them.

Katsuki inched towards the back edge of his podium, away from the

rodent creature, and tried not to stare at him. He didn't know why, but something about the rat-man made him antsy, paranoid… like Nezu always knew something that Katsuki didn't, like he could see into every inch of Katsuki's soul.

He kind of reminded him of Auntie Hinko now that he thought about it.

"I want to start off by thanking all our wonderful students who participated this year," the principal began, overly cheery voice echoing effortlessly through the arena. "Every year we see so many talents and quirks, and I know each and every one of you are going to make great heroes one day! Not just in our hero department, but from our support students as well! We learn here at UA that a hero is not only someone with a strong quirk, but one with a strong mind as well. Our students work hard in all areas of education and training, in order to be the best that they can be. Many of our support students go on to be great sidekicks and heroes themselves! Many have even created wonderful and incredible support companies to help the heroes out there in the world!"

Katsuki rolled his eyes at the droning principal. He hated speeches, especially ones that turned into history lessons or a means to brag about the school.

Katsuki…

A shift of purple hair. A voice brushing against his mind. Violet eyes.

Katsuki… look at me…

"Today we have seen so many wonderful and powerful quirks- from explosive quirks to levitation quirks! But what is most important, I find, is how these quirks were used-" *Katsuki, goddamnit, look at me!* "-celent use of such a wonderful quirk! I want to tell you however, how proud I am of my support students as well! While many use this event to show off their creation skills, one specific student here used this event to prove something else. To prove that he could be a hero, *without* a quirk!"

Katsuki!

Red eyes flickered gold and Katsuki found Shinsou in the crowd immediately. The boy looked exhausted, more so than usual at least, and even from their distance, Katsuki could see the sweat building on his skin. He looked relieved to have gotten Katsuki's attention, though

he was having to lean heavily on a confused and worried Kaminari.

‘Danger,’ he signed with the hand that wasn’t wrapped over Kaminari’s shoulder, and Katsuki went rigid immediately, senses on high alert.

He kept his hand at his side as to not draw attention and finger spelled, ‘villain?’

But Shinsou shook his head. He took a moment, gripping at his hair in what looked like pain before purple met red again, before panting and signing, ‘pack danger. Spirits are here.’

“I know what you’re thinking,” Nezu continued, ignorant to the two teens communications. “Of course we didn’t see him use his quirk, since he relied so heavily on his support items. I had some people ask me if young Midoriya had an intelligence quirk. But I’m here to tell you here and now the truth!”

Everything Auntie Hinko had warned him about was swimming through his head. Everything she’d told him about how hybrids not living past infancy, about other spirits *eating* them. She’d warned him to be careful using his fox in front of others, so did Shinsou. But he’d gotten comfortable at UA. Comfortable with his pack. Sure, he’d used his fox in public on the beach when they were training over the summer, but they’d been careful that no one was around.

But now he had two tails. He had more powers. He had a *pack*.

He couldn’t help but wonder if that made him more of a target.

‘*Gather the pack,’* Katsuki signed quickly. ‘*Keep them close.’*

Shinsou nodded at the order, and with the help of Kaminari at his side he disappeared back into the crowd.

“As principal of UA, I am honored to introduce you all to our very first quirkless student to place in the Sports Festival!”

“Shinsou, you’re really worrying me. What’s going on?”

His head was *throbbing* inside his skull, like an animal bashing itself up against its cage, trying to escape. It made him want to vomit, to crawl into some dark, small space and shut the world out. But he couldn’t get past the overwhelming sense of *danger danger danger* that was

screaming at him.

They'd managed to stumble into one of the empty hallways before Shinsou all but collapsed against one of the walls, Kaminari's gentle hands the only thing keeping him up straight. He was babbling something about finding Recovery Girl, or a teacher, but Shinsou was just shaking his head, pushing at the boy's shoulder to get his attention.

"Just go," he ordered, pushing at him more. "Find the rest of the pack, all of them. Get them into the café and- nngh- keep them there until I come get you," he groaned, another stab of pain stabbing into his head. He'd never felt anything like it, but it felt like… hunger. Like starvation but slicing through his mind instead of his stomach. Gods, it was *awful*.

"*You're a part of a pack now,"* Auntie Hinko had told him. *"You've found your clan, your Kitsune. You'll find yourself growing stronger as he does. You'll no doubt find new abilities you didn't think you had before, and it will be painful."*

"Painful? Why?"

"Your kind are not meant to be solitary, little Satori. They are built to serve, to protect. They are meant to be in a clan, to be close to a Kitsune," the old woman explained, refilling the tea he'd barely touched. *"It is why you feel so drawn to Katsuki, but you are being thrust into a life you didn't know you had. And it will catch up to you."*

"What? No! I'm- I'm not leaving you, Shinsou!"

The purple-haired boy wrapped his fingers in Kaminari's shirt and used whatever strength he had left to push the shorter boy up against the wall, towering over him with a dark look in his eyes. "Kaminari, *go get the others and take them to the café*."

He hated using his quirk on his friends… but they were exposed right now, in danger, and Shinsou *needed* to make sure the rest of the pack stayed safe. He needed to make sure they were together in case something happened.

So he steeled himself as the dull-eyed blonde turned and walked away from him, and waited until he was out of sight to focus. His head felt like it was ripping itself apart, but if he focused hard enough, he could pinpoint the attackers. Pinpoint which direction the constant barrage of *danger danger danger* and *eat eat eat* was coming from. And despite

every instinct in him telling him to turn and run in the opposite direction, Shinsou stalked towards it instead.

He could feel his spirit pressing tight against his skin. Something wild and vicious and smart that wanted nothing more than to tear something to shreds.

“Well *hello* little monkey~”

Shinsou tensed at the voice, at the familiar way it slid through his mind on the back of the stabbing pain of hunger, and turned to face it. Or them…

There were two of them, standing side by side just down around the corner in an abandoned hallway. Shinsou didn’t recognize them, but he didn’t suppose he would have in the first place. The woman was short, with matted grey hair and pale skin spottled with splotches of dark marks. Like someone had accidently spilt brown ink across her face and arms. Her slit green eyes stared at him like he was a gift under a tree that she just couldn’t wait to unwrap. The man beside her was taller, with long black hair that fell to his waist in a haphazard braid and his long, lanky limbs looked almost awkward as he leaned against the wall. Like someone shoved a skeleton into a skin suit that was too small for it.

He didn’t have to focus very hard to see their spirits. They came in waves of colours and shapes, forming around the two like auras and it wasn’t difficult for Shinsou to make them out now that he knew what to look for.

A two-tailed cat and a fox.

A nekomata and a Kitsune- no… a nogitsune- a field fox. Not nearly as high ranked as Katsuki he suspected.

“So you’re the reason I feel like I’m gonna puke,” the satori said, pushing himself to stand tall and struggling to not show the pain he was still feeling, though dulled now that he’d managed to find the source of it. “You’ve got a lot of balls coming here. This school is filled with heroes right now. Whatever you’re here to do, you won’t get away with it.”

“Oh sweet little thing,” the cat cooed, her image shifting like an after image on a film before Shinsou felt her claws softly brushing against his throat from behind where she now stood. “Your mortal heroes do not scare us,” she whispered into his ear.

Shinsou tensed, twisting on his heel as fast as he could to ram his elbow into her face, only to find her gone, an after image left in her place. When he turned back to where she'd started, she was giggling. "We came because we thought we smelt a little bastard kit, but instead we found you. Now, I'm not complaining, Satori infants are just as delicious as a kit, but I'm a bit disappointed in having to change dinner plans."

Protect the clan. Protect the pack.

Shinsou could feel his canines elongating in his mouth, feel his nails form into claws and his hair grow longer around his face. He was sure he looked mad, with the red and blue glow that settled over his cheeks and the way he crouched into a fighting position. It'd been so long since he'd even *thought* about this form, much less used it. Not since his gran had passed away.

He wondered briefly what it even looked like anymore.

"Oh! Oh look Batori, he wants to fight us!" The cat giggled in excitement, tugging at the fox's sleeve and grinning. "He thinks he can win! A little clanless Satori bastard. Oh baby, you have no chance against something like us. Your little human powers don't work on us."

But Shinsou knew better, because he *wasn't* clanless. He had a family now, he had a pack- a clan. He knew where he belonged and Katsuki had given that to him. Katsuki had given him something worth protecting, and he was damn well going to do it. So he reached out with his mind, feeling it brush against the cat's gently and feeling that starvation once more. "I think you're underestimating me," he said carefully, unsure if this was even going to work, "you wanna find out?"

"Don't mind if I-"

Sliding his quirk into her mind was surprisingly easy for him. He'd expected a fight, expected it to be a struggle *if* it had even worked. He'd never tried his quirk on a spirit before, not a full one at least. He and Katsuki trained sometimes with his quirk during class, but Katsuki was a hybrid so he'd never questioned it. Still, it was almost *too* easy to slip into her mind, making her stop mid stride, her green eyes dulled and dead.

He didn't even need to focus to keep the hold on her. She wasn't even fighting back.

“What did you *do*?”

Ah, right… the fox.

Shinsou just barely managed to dodge the claw raking through the air, but he wasn’t fast enough to block the kick aimed at his ribs. Still sore from his fight with Izuku, he groaned as he connected with the wall, his head slamming against it. Still, he managed to keep the hold on the cat- which shouldn’t be possible- and he ducked another punch aimed at his head.

The fight was not an easy one. Shinsou was exhausted and in pain already, but the fox in front of him was weak as well, too thin and wild, like it hadn’t eaten in weeks. It was hard to focus, hard to plan his moves when the Kitsune didn’t seem to have a strategy at all. It wasn’t calm and collected like Katsuki was, wasn’t thinking through its moves or trying to win the fight itself. This was desperation, wild hunger and anger all mixed together. This thing was more animal than human (or spirit rather). It was vicious and dangerous.

Because this thing was out for blood. It wasn’t a regular villain who wanted to destroy heroes or to rob a bank. This thing wanted to tear his throat out just for the fun of it. Wanted to devour him messy and whole.

“Shinsou!”

Katsuki.

He shouldn’t have let the voice distract him. Shouldn’t have even registered it. But he did, and it left just enough of an opening for claws to dig sharp into his side, digging up under his ribs and pulling an agonizing scream from his throat.

There was a familiar shift in the air. A glimpse of black and orange. A primal growl echoing through the halls.

Katsuki… don’t…

“Pikachu, where the hell have you been?” Katsuki growled when he finally caught sight of that stupid lightning bolt hair. He’d been pacing their corner of the café for the past five minutes, having already gathered the pack and shoved them into one table where he could see all of them.

All of them except two.

Because the two people he'd sent to gather the rest, had never shown up.

"Kami?"

Katsuki frowned at the tone in Kirishima's voice, turning to gaze at the other blonde with a frown.

Seeing Shinsou's quirk in action was always creepy as fuck. There was never any expression on their faces, no life in their eyes. They just stood there like mindless puppets, doing whatever he asked them to. It was fuckin' useful and badass, but creepy all the same. Katsuki hated seeing that look on anyone in the pack outside of training.

"Shinsou used his quirk on him," Katsuki growled, stalking up towards the electric boy and tugging him by the arm into a chair beside Mina. He knelt down between the boy's legs and glared up at him, snapping his fingers in the boy's face as if it'd work. "Oi, Pikachu, wake up. Why are you here? Where is Shinsou?"

Kaminari blinked down at him, his eyes foggy and empty but he didn't answer.

"Can you tell me what he ordered?"

"Find the pack," Kaminari answered in a voice that almost echoed around them, repeating words he had never spoken. "Take them to the café and keep them there."

Which probably meant he already knew where the bastards were. *Fuck*. "Fucking idiot's gonna get himself killed. He doesn't know-" he cut himself off quickly, sparing a glance towards Izuku and Shouto and gritting his teeth. "He doesn't know what he's getting himself into." He said it with a certain tone that had both boys widening their eyes and he could see the panic in them. The realization that what they'd feared might come was finally here. And Katsuki was just *standing there*. Doing *nothing*. Knowing one of his pack members was out there? In danger? It was tearing at his skin like claws, digging into his brain and screaming at him to move. To stop it. To save him.

"I'm going after him, you guys stay here-"

"What? No way man!" Kirishima argued, shooting to his feet and glaring at Katsuki in a rare bout of defiance. "Shinsou's our friend too!

He's part of the pack. If you think he's in danger, then we want to help!"

The others chimed in as all, all except Izuku and Shouto who were the only ones who truly knew what was happening. But Katsuki didn't have time for this. He didn't have time to argue. His fox was screaming at him to just fucking *move*. "You don't know what you're dealing with," he growled, his words echoed under the fox. "*Fuck*-fine! I don't have time for this-" He grunted at the dull pain in his ribs and the fox forcibly tugged him backwards towards the door. He didn't fight it this time, instead just turning on his heal and breaking out into a sprint.

Distantly he could hear the others following him, but he was too focused on the dull pains he could feel around his body. Pains that weren't his.

"Shinsou!"

Katsuki had never seen another Kitsune before, but something in him told him this one was wrong somehow. It was fully transformed, with long gangly legs and its ribs protruding from it's red-orange fur. The thing wasn't as big as Katsuki was in his fox, but still big enough to pin Shinsou to the ground, its claws digging deep into the other boy's side.

The sight of his pack member's blood on that *things* hands was enough to send him forward.

The fox ripped out of him like a wild beast, flames licking up around his paws and tails and a loud, ear-piercing howl escaped his snout as he launched himself at the other fox. The world around him was foggy, hazy, like he was stuck in a dream and not quite in control of what he was doing. Like the fox had control and he was just letting it go.

It didn't scare him necessarily, but it was… unfamiliar.

When he'd gone in to save All Might at the USJ, he'd had complete control. He had almost extreme focus on the villains he was fighting. But now it was distant. Like the rage and the *need* to protect was all consuming.

Part of his mind was aware of the others pulling Shinsou to safety. Part of his mind was aware of Izuku calling his name, of Shouto trying to step closer and stop him from doing… something. He didn't know

what.

Blood pooled around his mouth and he felt something *snap* between his teeth.

Then finally, *finally* the fox calmed down enough for Katsuki to breathe. To turn his attention towards the other yokai in the hall that stared at him with big, wide eyes.

She had broken out of Shinsou's hold the moment he'd fallen unconscious. Yet still she hadn't moved. Still, she stared at Katsuki like he was her worst nightmare made real. *Good*.

"Y-you're-" she stuttered, scrambling backwards when Katsuki took a step forward, the fire around his paws scorching the ground with each step he took. "You're not supposed to have two," she breathed out, her eyes trained on the black and orange tails thrashing behind him. "You're a half-breed. You shouldn't have the honor of-"

A snarl ripped its way out of Katsuki's chest as he pounced, trapping the cat beneath him and watching as it trembled in fear. It squeaked and curled in on itself, but Katsuki leans close enough for his heavy breathing to push her hair from her face. The fox's voice was deep and gravely when it left his throat, like stones tumbling down a mountainside. "You've attacked one of mine."

"We didn't know!" The cat insisted. "We thought you were clanless! We thought you were just a bastard not- not-" Her eyes trailed to the two tails again. "We didn't know you were the queen's! We didn't know- we thought-"

"You thought *wrong*," the fox growled, baring it's teeth at her and letting the blood drip onto her pale, frightened face. "You've attacked *my* pack. You are lucky I do not kill you where you lie."

The cat whimpered, closing her eyes and flinching away from him.

Good, she should be scared. I'll tear her to shreds before she can even think-

"Katsuki."

A cold hand settled at the nape of his neck, fingers curling into his long fur and holding on as if to reign him in. A smaller hand settled between his ears, warm and familiar and smelling like *home*.

“Let her go, Katsuki,” Izuku demanded.

And he didn’t want to. She didn’t deserve to live after what they’d done. After threatening what was *his* by *right*. But he was tired, and he was sore, and it was hard to say no to his partners. And Shinsou was injured… he didn’t have time or energy to waste on back alley cats.

“Go back to your queen,” he told the cat, leaning in again to growl the words against the cat’s twitching ear. “Go back to your queen and tell her to leave me and what’s mine alone. Next time I won’t be so generous.”

He waited until the cat had vanished, leaving only after images in her wake and the scent of starch and fear, before letting the fox fall away. Hiding it back behind all too human skin. His body felt weak and too tired, still not completely healed from the festival that seemed to happen so long ago. He would have collapsed had it not been for Shouto’s arm that wrapped around his waist, holding him up.

“Shinsou?”

“He’s fine,” Izuku assured the blonde, his voice strained and raw, his cheeks tear stained. Katsuki wondered why he was crying if the purple bastard was fine. “He’s okay, just passed out from the pain. But Kaachan- are you okay?”

The Kitsune scoffed, rolling his eyes at the question that he didn’t quite have an answer to. Was he okay? He couldn’t really focus on anything long enough to know if he was or not. “Course I’m fine, why wouldn’t I be?”

“Kaachan… you- do you remember what just happened?”

“That’s a dumb fucking question, Izu…” he mumbled back, struggling not to drop his head on Shouto’s shoulder and just fall asleep. A cool hand pressed against the back of his neck again and he sighed at the sensation. It was calming. “I got the bastard off Shinsou, and the other one ran off with her fucking tails between her legs.”

There was a long silence in the hall that had Katsuki forcing himself to focus again. He pried his eyes open to look down at Izuku, only to see tears welling up in them again as the boy opened his mouth to speak.

“Kaachan… you didn’t fight the other fox… you killed him.”

Chapter End Notes

Okay SO I was definitely going to push Katsuki's kitsune stuff back a little longer, but just got really excited and it's happening a little earlier. Woops XD Hope everyone enjoyed that chapter! Next one ya'll get a little surprise that literally just came to me and now I'm stoked to get to writing it. Wooooo

rushes off to write

As always I love you all and you're amazing! Stay safe and drink water!

Chapter 20: Who's What?

Chapter Summary

More secrets are dropped. Katsuki needs a hug.

Chapter Notes

Hi everyone! Wow! You guys really liked the last chapter! lol well here's the next one! You're in for a big surprise and I'm excited to see people's reactions!

No trigger warnings in this one other than maybe some heavy emotions towards the end. Also mentions of some blood and aftermath of the fight, but nothing too graphic.

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Something was wrong.

Shouta could feel it. Like death and forest fires in the air, warning him of danger nearby. It set his nerves on edge, his senses careening for some sign of what it was that was wrong. It couldn't have been something with the school or the alarms would have gone off and the students were all in the café for the after party- which Shouta had resolutely refused to attend, instead deciding to take up residence in the teacher's lounge with his sleeping bag.

"Shou? What's wrong?"

He glanced up at where his husband was sat beside him, having also wanted a break from the crowds and content with sitting with him and reading. He had a worried furrow to his brow as he looked at Shouta and he wiggled his fingers in the direction of the eraser hero's eyes. "Your eyes are doing their thing again. Their glowing thing."

Something was *really* wrong then.

And then it hit him. The sharp, metallic scent of blood across tile. *Drip drip dripping*. The scent familiar enough to send Shouta to his feet in an instant.

Problem children.

But it wasn't just Shinsou's blood he could smell. That he was used to. His students got hurt enough in training for him to be able to pinpoint their scents from a mile away. Only this was different. Because it was mixed with something else. Mixed with the blood of a yokai that Shouta didn't recognize.

"Shouta?"

"Go find Nezu," he interrupted, turning towards his husband with glowing eyes. "Tell him there's a yokai in the building and then come find me."

He didn't wait for a response before darting out of the room, following the scent of panic and hunger and fear and *blood*.

Fuck. He'd known it was only a matter of time before something like this happened. He knew it was coming the moment he saw Katsuki at the entrance exams, knew it'd come even faster when Shinsou had transferred into his class. But still, he'd hoped he'd have more time to work with them. More time to train them, to teach them- get them to trust him. He thought the wards around the school were strong enough for Katsuki's presence not to escape. He thought the boy would be safe to train his spirit here without the risk of others finding out.

He'd thought wrong.

By the time he finally reached his students, the hallway was a bloodbath. Kaminari was on the ground, clinging an unconscious Shinsou to his chest. Kirishima, Sero, Mina and Hatsume were standing in front of them protectively, though they all looked confused and scared out of their wits. His problem trio were further up the hallway, Katsuki covered in blood and leaning too heavily on a worried looking Todoroki, Midoriya hovering around like a worried hen.

And in the middle of the hall was the nogitsune.

It laid in a pool of its own blood, throat torn out messily and claw marks dug in between protruding ribs. It's fur was mangy, so it was probably clanless, or at the very least belonged to one of the lesser clans, but lucky for them it'd died in its fox form which would make it much easier for cleanup.

"I… killed him?"

Shit.

"Stop."

All eyes shot up to Shouta, but he kept his gaze on Katsuki's.

The boy looked so incredibly torn, like he knew he didn't have a choice but- well no one wants to kill someone. Especially a kid just trying to be a hero.

So the older man took careful steps around his students and over the dead fox in the hall, until he got to where Katsuki was standing. He took a deep breath and dropped his hands on the blonde's shoulders, making sure those red eyes were on his before he spoke. "You were defending you friends, Midoriya. What you did was self-defense. That thing attacked you, it hurt Shinsou, and it would have killed you if you hadn't done it first."

"But-" The blonde sucked in a deep breath, his voice shaking as he stared down at his blood covered hands. Shouto could see the panic rising in his eyes, hear it in the way his breaths stuttered in his chest. "But I killed him. I- heroes don't kill and I- I'm gonna get suspended or-or arrested and-"

"Problem child," Shouta interrupted, dropping a hand on the top of the boy's head, right between where his black ears were pressed back. "I'm not going to suspend you. As far as anyone is concerned, you were never here." Bright eyes met his instantly and he tried to give the boy a small smile. With his own deep breath, he turned towards Todoroki and the youngest Midoriya. "He has a priestess I assume? Someone he has to protect him?" When the green-haired boy nodded, Shouta released a breath he hadn't known he was holding. "Good. Take him there and take the rest of the pack with you. Kaminari, how is Shinsou?"

The smaller blonde jumped at being addressed and swallowed. "U-um… I think the bleeding has stopped?"

"Good," he said, bobbing his head and turning his head just in time to see Nezu and Hizashi turning the corner at a run. "Mic will take all of you to the priestess. She'll help Shinsou and Midoriya. Midoriya, call your mother and have her meet you there as well. She'll need to be with the pack until we get this all sorted out. I don't want her in anymore danger than necessary."

Katsuki swallowed, tugging at Shouta's sleeve. "But the- the Kitsune-"

“We’ll take care of it,” he answered smoothly. “I want you all out of here before the other one brings back reinforcements. Nezu and I will take care of this, and then I’ll meet you at the priestess’ house. Alright?” He didn’t wait for a response before gently nudging the boys towards his husband. Hizashi shot him a worried look, but Shouta didn’t have time to explain anything. This hallway wasn’t necessarily well traveled, but he didn’t want to risk anyone walking in on… this.

So instead of arguing, Hizashi slipped over towards the small crowd of students and easily lifted Shinsou into his arms, much to the dismay of Kaminari who refused to let go of the other boy’s hand. He shot the others a quick glance before grimacing. “We’ll take the back entrance to the car. No one will see us there, but it might be a tight squeeze. I’ve never had eight people in the car before.”

Nezu had been silent the entire time, having completely ignored the children to step up towards the dead fox in the middle of the walkway. There was a strange expression on his face, something sitting between concern and excitement, and Shouta wasn’t quite sure what to do with that information. So he didn’t do anything other than crouch down in front of the principal with his own frown.

“This is happening faster than we thought.”

“Not really,” Nezu responded in that annoyingly high voice that told Shouta he was probably expecting this. “You know as well as I do that neither of those boys should even be alive right now. Honestly, this should have happened much sooner. I wish to know why it didn’t.”

Shouta sighed, rubbing a hand over his tired face. “They didn’t have a pack before. Now they do. That makes them both stronger, more noticeable. Not to mention the fact that Midoriya has two tails now. I didn’t even know that was possible for a hybrid. It’s going to make him even more of a target, not just from the general yokai, but from his family too. They’ll start to seek him out.”

Nezu hummed and stood, brushing his paws off on his pants. “Are you going to tell him about his mother?”

“I should.” Not that he wanted to, but it would be obvious by now that Shouta knew more than he should. His students would start to ask questions that he wouldn’t be able to avoid. Plus, it’d probably be safer for them if he told them what he could. He held no obligation to any clan anymore, he wasn’t sworn to secrecy like Mitsuki had been. He was free to do as he thought best, which meant not keeping his

kids in the dark longer than necessary. Especially if Katsuki's heritage was coming down on them faster than he had hoped. "This isn't hero business," he said carefully, looking up at the principal with a frown. "You don't need to get all wrapped up in it."

But the creature just laughed and batted his hands. "Nonsense! These are my students who are in danger! I may not be like you three, but I am still involved and will help whenever I can. If that means cleaning up this mess, then so be it! Now go, and see if you can't convince that priestess of theirs to come fix the wards at this school," Nezu ordered, hands on his hips as he frowned down at the mess. "I was assured that none of their kind could get in here. I'd like to make sure of that next time."

"Thanks."

"Take care of those kids, Shouta. They'll change the world one day," Nezu called after him. "We need to make sure they live long enough to do it."

Hinko had woken up that morning knowing that something was going to go wrong.

She could sense it in the air like a bad omen, and no amount of incense or wards that she put up seemed to do any good. She'd even called Inko to make sure nothing had happened to the boys and was assured that they were at the school for the festival. Still, something ugly and heavy settled in her stomach as she waited, listening to the festival on her television throughout the day. She'd closed the shop for the day, knowing that what little customers she'd normally have wouldn't be coming in anyway thanks to the events at UA, but something told her to keep the door unlocked just in case.

Turns out she was right.

Though she knew something was wrong, she hadn't expected to have an entire gaggle of students and one teacher barge in through her door, slam it shut, and then lock it behind them.

She knew who they were, or at least most of them. The three at the front of the group were enough for her to put together who the rest of them were. Not that she had much time to dwell on who was who, not with the scent of blood mixing in the air.

"My, my, aren't you all a big surprise," Hinko sighed, lifting the

counter up and ushering them into the back room. “Come on then, every in the back. Izuku dear, go get the first aid kit from the bathroom, and Shouto sweetheart, you remember where the towels are?”

After that, Hinko set to work.

The eldest of the group, who introduced himself as one of their teachers, Yamada Hizashi (“But please, just call me Mic”), assisted her in getting young Shinsou laid down and fixed up. The bleeding had stopped, but the wounds were still deep enough to require stitches, which she allowed the blonde to do considering her lack of sight. (Most things she could do with just her quirk, medical surgery? Not so much.) The other students- pack members –were huddled nearby, all silent as they waited to be appraised of the young Satori’s situation, and Izuku and Shouto had ushered Katsuki off to the bathroom to clean the blood off of him.

“I do hate to ask this,” Hinko said quietly, so Mic was the only one who could hear her, “but I do hope you’re not going to tell me Katsuki did this to him.”

“Ah- no,” Mic said quickly, shaking his head and helping her lift Shinsou just high enough to wrap the bandages around his torso. “There was another yokai there. It was a fox, but I only know that because it stayed in its form after it died. I don’t- I don’t know if it was the same kind as Midoriya,” he apologized. “I am… not very knowledgeable about that… stuff.”

Hinko nodded, waving a hand with a smile before tying off the bandages and helping him lay the boy back down. “I’m surprised you know anything at all, honestly.”

It wasn’t a question, but she suspected the man knew it was a demand for an explanation. She might have actually demanded too if the lights in the room didn’t flicker right at that moment, the wards in the walls burning bright enough for the others to see. The children in the corner gasped in surprise, huddling closer to each other, as a man literally stumbled through her wall and collapsed to the floor, grunting and panting as he struggled to catch his breath.

“Son of a *bitch*-“ he groaned, his body flickering as the wards tried to fight him off, like a television turning on and off again.

“Shouta!”

“Mr. Aizawa!”

The man struggled as Present Mic ran up to him, but he held out a hand to stop him and tried to breathe through the pain he was no doubt feeling. “Stop, don’t- just drop the fucking wards-“ he spat out. “I’m their teacher. Fuck-”

His words were true enough, as were the concerned looks on all of their faces, so with a wave of her hand, Hinko dropped the wards and hummed. “My apologies,” she said, though she wasn’t. “I’ve had them set up specifically to keep your kind *out* of my shop. As you can probably see why.” She didn’t move from her spot next to the satori boy, but watched carefully as Mic helped the other man up into a seated position and the students all rushed to his side, flocking around him like baby kittens to their mother. *Interesting*. “You understand how concerned I am to have two of my charges come barreling in covered in blood, their pack absolutely terrified, accompanied only by a human adult who clearly knows just enough and yet nothing at all. I do hope you have an explanation.”

“Yeah, I’d like one too.”

Katsuki’s voice was rough and gargled as Shouto and Izuku led him back into the room. He looked better, without all the blood on him, but she could sense he was still weak. Whether that be from the mind or the body, she couldn’t quite tell. Perhaps both. His gaze was on his teacher as he was led towards the kotatsu and sat down, a sneer settled ugly on his lips.

“You gonna tell us how the hell you know anything about this shit old man? And why the wards worked on you in the first place?”

Ah, so he didn’t know then.

“Yeah actually,” the little pink girl interrupted, raising her hand as if she were in class. “I think we’ve all been very patient in like, letting you guys have your thing or whatever. But can someone *please* tell us what the heck is going on?”

The redhaired boy who had taken up a spot next to Katsuki nodded and frowned. “Yeah! Secrets between pack mates is not manly! I’m so confused right now!”

Hinko couldn’t help the sigh that escaped her as she shot Katsuki a glare. “This could have been avoided, little kit, if you’d have explained everything to them when I told you to.” She waved towards

the kotatsu and waited until they'd all settled to begin. "I suppose I'll explain since Katsuki didn't. I know you've all seen his fox form by now," she received a series of nods and she smiled. "Well what you don't know is that Katsuki's fox is not a secondary quirk. It is in fact, a part of him."

"A yokai." She raised her eyebrow at the young, electric blonde who'd spoke and he laughed a bit awkwardly. "I uh- like to read. Sorry. Go ahead."

She shook her head and smiled. "No, you are correct. Young Katsuki, and young Shinsou as well, are what we call yokai. You may also know them as spirits. Their world, Ikai, sits atop ours, Sekai. Its own place but with thin veils that allow yokai to travel here when they wish to. For the most part, yokai are very dangerous to humans. Many of them feed off of them, others simply enjoy mischief and chaos. There are others however that are mostly peaceful yokai. They tend to stick to their own and keep out of the affairs of mortals. Kitsune are one of these yokai."

"We learned about Kitsune in grade school," the dark haired boy with strange elbows said with a frown. "That's what Kaachan and Shinsou are?"

Katsuki snorted and rolled his eyes. "*I* am," he said sharply, crossing his arms defensively over his chest. "Mindsweeper over there is something different though. He didn't tell me."

"Shinsou here is a Satori," Hinko explained easily. "They are monkey spirits who often times serve under a Kitsune clan. It's why he was so drawn to your little pack. He no doubt felt the need to be close to Katsuki, to protect him. It's in their blood. However, neither of them are full blooded. Katsuki and Shinsou are both hybrids, which unfortunately puts them in a lot of danger in regards to other yokai."

"Why?" the red-haired boy asked.

"Because yokai eat hybrids."

Hinko turned her empty gaze towards the dark haired teacher, Aizawa she thinks they called him, as he answered the question and nodded. "Hybrids are extremely rare," she continued. "Other than these two, I have never heard of a hybrid being born since long before quirks had even begun to appear. They are considered weak and are often consumed before they make it out of infancy."

“They’re considered a delicacy,” Aizawa interrupted again, a dark look in his eyes as he stared down at the unconscious boy.

The girl with pink dreadlocks grimaced. “That’s gross and super weird. But why are they alive then? Just sheer luck?”

Hinko hummed in consideration and wiggled her hand in a so-so motion. “Perhaps a little bit of luck. Shinsou here had a priestess as a grandmother and Katsuki here had me. We are able to shield our homes from yokai, make it difficult for them to come in and out, things like that. We are put in place to guard the veils and the temples, to keep the peace between the two realms as much as we can. I was able to hide Katsuki for most of his life, up until recently I suppose. Mic here tells me another yokai appeared?”

The question was aimed at Aizawa and the man hunched in on himself a bit at the attention, but he nodded. “A nogitsune,” he spat in disgust. “Field foxes… never know when to stop. Wandering around with a nekomata.”

“Which are?” Izuku pressed.

“Nogitsune are very similar to Kitsune,” the man explained, “but they don’t usually travel in packs or belong to clans. They’re lone animals and they suffer for it. They’re called dark Kitsune sometimes, seen more as the evil side of the coin whereas Kitsune are holy.” He glared down at the bandages around Shinsou’s torso and grimaced. “The nekomata is more dangerous because it’s smarter. Nogitsune run on adrenaline and desperation. They have no self-control over themselves. Nekomatas are just as vicious but they’re smarter. They know when to run, know when to attack. They’re two-tailed cat demons who don’t deserve to set foot in this realm.”

The disdain in his voice was familiar and Hinko blinked at him in surprise. “Ah, you’re a Maneki-neko. Yes, that makes sense now as to why you were able to get through my wards in the first place. It has been quite a while since I’ve seen one of you, and never one on its own.” The man glared at her but she batted his anger away and laugh. “Don’t act so surprised, little cat. I’ve never met a Maneki-neko that didn’t hate nekomatas. The loud one,” she asked, gesturing towards Mic. “Does he know?”

“He knows the basics,” Aizawa shrugged. “I didn’t tell him anything that might put him in danger.”

“Wait wait wait wait wait,” the redhaired boy interrupted, waving his

hands madly in front of him. “Mr. Aizawa is a yokai demon too? Just how many of our friends are?”

“Just us,” the teacher said nonchalantly.

Which, perhaps was not the best answer, not with so much stress and confusion in the room, because Katsuki was clearly upset by the news, slamming his hands down heavy on the kotatsu as he rounded on his teacher. “You’re one of us and you never fucking told me? Did you- did you *know*? This whole fucking time? Even with the fog and shit? You didn’t say a damn thing?”

“Of course I knew,” he snorted, rolling his eyes. “But I’m different than the two of you. I’m not a hybrid. I’m full blooded. I could smell you the instant you stepped onto school grounds. Besides, your mother warned me about you when you were born. Asked me to watch over you, to which I told her to fuck off. Turns out she didn’t need to ask because you ended up in my classroom anyway.” He said it grumpily, like he was upset at fate putting things in place, but Hinko got the sense that the man was actually grateful. That he cared for these kids more than he wanted to admit. “And I didn’t know about the fog. That’s nothing I’ve seen in your kind before. Which isn’t very surprising since you’re different than any other Kitsune I’ve met.”

“Oh thanks,” Katsuki scoffed. “I feel so *fucking* special.”

“You are,” Hinko insisted, for probably the hundredth time. “I’ve told you once boy and I’ll tell you again. You are different than any other hybrid I’ve seen. Hybrids do not grow new tails. They do not live past infancy. They do not get new powers or build packs. You are different.”

Aizawa frowned, head tilting slightly in consideration. “It’s probably due to his bloodline.”

The others glanced at him in confusion, but Mic was the one who asked the question, “bloodline?”

“Yeah, apparently I’m fucking royalty or something,” Katsuki shrugged, as if he didn’t care in the slightest. Which was probably true. “My birth mom runs our clan I guess. Auntie Hinko says I have stake to take over if I wanted to, now that I have two tails. And that cat chick was *terrified* of me. Said she didn’t know I was the queen’s or she never would have come after me.”

“She saw you?” Aizawa asked with wide eyes, his entire body tensing

where he sat. “She saw your Kitsune form?” Katsuki frowned at him and shrugged, making the dark haired cat swear under his breath. “Shit… that’s going to cause problems.”

“Why?” the little kit asked with a frown.

“Because of your colours,” Aizawa explained, running a hand through his hair. “They’re very unique. In fact, I’ve never seen a Kitsune your colour before. They’re always orange or white. Never black like you. And if you let the cat go, she’s going to go straight to the nearest clan and tell them everything.”

Izuku gripped Katsuki’s hand in his lap and swallowed. “Why-why is that a bad thing? Why does his fur colour matter?”

“Because it means Katsuki is another type of delicacy. He’s a Kiko.”

The name brought Hinko to a start and she blinked in surprise, gaze shooting over to the man. “He is not.”

But Aizawa nodded. “He is. You can’t sense it as strongly as I can because you’re human. No doubt the can sensed it the moment Midoriya transformed. I had my suspicions, but I’ve never met a Kiko before so I couldn’t be sure. Not until I saw him at the USJ. Hybrids can’t grow two tails. It’s never been done, I’ve never even heard of it in the ones who *have* lived past infancy. They also don’t create packs, they don’t get satori to protect them. Not to mention, only Kiko have black fur. Midoriya is the most powerful hybrid I’ve ever seen.”

“He’s also sitting right the fuck here,” Katsuki interrupted. “What the fuck is a Kiko.”

“It’s a sacred fox,” Hinko responded quietly. “Blessed by the god Inari as messengers and guardians.”

“It’s no doubt why the nekomata ran away from you. Even if you were just the queen’s hybrid son, it should have put up a fight. It should have tried to still take you down,” Aizawa continued, his brow furrowing. “But it’s considered a great dishonor to kill a Kiko, or even to attack one. The fact that your mother even gave birth to you puts her as one of the most honored and powerful Kitsune of her time. Not that anyone knows about you. I doubt she even knows what you are.”

“But- what does all that mean?” The elbow boy asked. (Hinko should really learn these kids names if they were going to be sticking around.) “Is he going to be in danger or something now?”

Silence settled over the room and Aizawa sighed, rubbing at his white eyes with a sigh. “I… honestly don’t know. A Kiko hasn’t been born in- well in millennia. Not since I’ve been around or anyone I’ve known at least. This is… all an unknown right now. I don’t know if any of us really know what to expect.”

“You shouldn’t be out here on your own.”

Katsuki tensed, his fingers wrapping tight around the railing of the back porch, but he didn’t turn to face the red-head that stepped up beside him. “And you should be asleep,” he mumbled back. “It’s like two am.”

“Most of us are awake,” Kirishima said quietly, sliding up to Katsuki and pressing their shoulders together. “Shinsou woke up and it’s hard to sleep when you’re not in the pile.”

Something heavy lifted off Katsuki’s shoulders after hearing that Shinsou was awake. After Momma Inko had shown up and been given the run down, the adults had fucked off into the kitchen to discuss things and the pack had curled up around the purple haired boy, piled onto blankets and futons and pillows and each other. It was comforting, familiar… felt like home. Sometimes Katsuki didn’t quite know what to do with it- with this pack he’d built up. He and Izuku had always been loners, had always only had each other. Then came Shouto, and Hatsume, and Kirishima, and the others. And he was fine with the pack at first… fine with having them around, with the incessant need to protect them.

But now they were in danger because of him.

“You don’t have to stick around you know,” he said quietly, not taking his eyes off the large temple that sat on the big hill behind Auntie Hinko’s shop. In all his years of coming to the shop, he’d never once visited the temple. Never wanted to, or needed to. And she’d never asked him to. But now that he knew more about what he was, it felt like the building was mocking him. “You guys signed up to be heroes, but this is a lot more than you probably expected. You didn’t fuckin’- spirits and gods and shit are out of your pay grade. You don’t have to stay.”

Kirishima was quiet at his side for a while, letting the gentle hum of the midnight air settle around them. His presence was a steady force at Katsuki’s side, and the blonde was grateful for it. He was also grateful for the fact that the redhead wasn’t just brushing the

statement off, that he was actually taking his time to answer.

“I’m not gonna lie to you bro,” Kirishima started. “We learned about spirits and shit when we were kids, you know? They were stories around campfires, things your parents told you to get you to behave. Hell, the most interaction I’ve had with spirits before you was some little statue my moms have on the windowsill that they sometimes leave trinkets for. Something about health and good luck, I don’t know.” He sighed, running a hand through his hair and turning around until his back was to the temple and he could lean back against the railing. He didn’t look at Katsuki, but he kept close enough for them to feel each other’s heat. “Learning that all of that is real? Definitely a lot to take in, you know? It’s crazy, but… I still don’t think I’d change anything.”

Red eyes met red and Katsuki’s breath caught in his throat at the boy’s confession. “What?”

“Yeah,” Kirishima shrugged, a lazy sort of grin spreading across his sharp mouth. “Bro, you’re my best friend in the entire world. Those idiots in there?” He said, gesturing towards the shop with a bob of his head, “They’re my family. *You’re* my family. So what if you’re half fox god or whatever. You’re still you, and we’re still us. That hasn’t changed.”

“I *killed someone*.”

The words sounded like they were ripped out of him, clawed fingers digging down into his throat and tearing the truth up to spill across the ground like blood. He tried to fight back the tears that stabbed at his eyes but they fell anyway, barely a hint of the pain he was currently feeling in the base of his chest.

He could still feel the blood between his teeth, could still see it caked underneath his nails no matter how long he spent in the bathroom trying to scrub it out. “Anytime I close my eyes I can see it’s body lying there in the hallway,” he croaked, words riding out on a sob that tore through him. “I-I killed it. How am I supposed to be a hero when I *killed* someone, Ei?”

Strong, sturdy arms grabbed and pulled at him, tugging him into Kirishima’s chest before settling over his shoulders like a weighted blanket. He couldn’t help but drag in a breath, letting the familiar smell of leather and earth that always came with his best friend settle around him. He didn’t hug back, but he gave into the heat and leaned

his weight forward, letting his head rest on the other boy's shoulder.

"You save Shinsou's life," Kirishima corrected him, tucking Katsuki's head under his chin and holding him as tight as he could to his chest. "You probably saved all of us. That thing was like a wild animal, Kat. It wasn't human, it wasn't a person. What you did was self-defense, defense of the pack."

"That doesn't make it right," Katsuki argued.

Kirishima shrugged. "Maybe not. But if you hadn't killed it, then it would have killed you, or Shinsou, or any one of us. And now you know more," the redhead continued. "Now you know that they're scared of you, and you know you have a pack behind you to help. We're not going anywhere, Kat. We're all in it for the long run. We're here for you, like you've been there for us. If you need to fall apart, we'll be there to pick you up. Okay?" Katsuki didn't say anything, but he got the idea that he didn't need to because the arms just squeezed again and gave Katsuki a moment to breathe. "I don't expect you to be okay with what happened, bro. I mean, it's definitely a lot and I don't expect you to just be fine with it. It's probably a good thing that you're not just brushing it off. But just- don't do it on your own, okay? Let us help."

They stayed like that for a while, but Kirishima didn't complain, and Katsuki let himself get swallowed up in the tiny world that was created in his best friend's arms. Let himself grieve until it was easier to suck in a breath.

"Alright you big baby," the blonde finally grumbled, long after the tears had dried and his sniffling had stopped. He pushed haphazardly at the massive chest he was pushed up against and Kirishima let himself be pushed away with a bright laugh. Katsuki rolled his eyes, but didn't fight his own smile as he knocked a fist into the other boy's shoulder. "Enough chick-flick moments. Let's get back inside so you losers can get some sleep."

Kirishima laughed again and threw his arm around Katsuki's shoulders, leading him back into the warmth of the shop. "You got it mom! If we be good will you make us breakfast?"

Chapter End Notes

> Weeee! So, that was fun :) I'm trying to really work on the worldbuilding and such as we go along, especially as we get more into Katsuki's heritage plot, so we're finally starting to learn more

in depth information about it. We're really starting to get started in that now so a lot more kitsune stuff will start happening alongside canon stuff. I will say I'll probably skip some canon stuff, or just quickly brush over it since it won't be as important to the story. Hopefully it all still flows well.

Glad everyone is enjoying this!

Chapter 21: Interlude

Chapter Summary

Just some art I decided to draw :)
Sorry to disappoint if you were looking for a new chapter. It should be up tomorrow hopefully!

Hey everyone! I got super excited and decided to draw Katsuki with his tails! (Yes I know he doesn't have nine... yet...)

Anyway, enjoy the art! I'm hoping to get the next chapter up sometime tomorrow!

(The orange on the tails are supposed to be a bit brighter, but ao3 doesn't like my picture very much. It's a lot brighter on my ipad!)

And here is one from my other story 'A Cat with a Human Heart' that takes place as a prequel to this series! Check it out!

If you want to see a better version, check out my twitter or my tumblr!

@midnighttrashgoblin on tumblr and @goblintrashart on twitter

[image]

Love you all! Thanks for all the support!

Chapter 22: A Threat

Chapter Summary

Momma Inko goes *off* and Shouto gets to sleep.

Chapter Notes

Hi everyone! New chapter is up and running! I know you've all been waiting on baited breath for this scene, so here it is! Hope it's to everyone's satsifaction.

TRIGGER WARNINGS: Mentions of abuse, but nothing too drastic or detailed.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Endeavor Hero Agency.

The building was massive, with large windows and expensive looking balconies. It reached into the sky with all the strength of a number two hero, a large flaming ‘E’ hanging over the rotating front doors. In truth, Inko thought it was maybe a little much. Surely he couldn’t have enough heroes or sidekicks working at the agency to warrant it being so large. Still, it was a bit intimidating, which she supposed was probably the point.

“How are we supposed to get to Endeavor?” Katsuki asked from her side, his shoulders slumped to show his discomfort and his hands shoved in his pockets. “They’re not going to just let you walk up to the number two hero in Japan without an appointment. Hell, they probably won’t even let you schedule and appointment.”

“Oh don’t you worry about that, my dear. It’ll be easy-peasey.”

And surprisingly it was.

It was amazing the things you could do if you just acted like you belonged somewhere. Inko simply strutted into the building and walked straight to the elevator, her chin held high and her gaze unwavering. On the rare occasion that someone asked why she was there, she simply gestured towards Katsuki and told them he was friends with Endeavor’s son. Surprisingly, it worked like a charm. Shouto seemed to be well loved within the agency.

Now if only he was well loved at home too.

“Great, we’re here,” Katsuki grumbled as they reached the top floor where Endeavor’s office supposedly was. “They’re seriously not going to just let you in.”

But Inko wasn’t worried, because whatever it took, she was going to have a talk with that man and things were going to change. She had hatred boiling in her chest, the need to punch someone, and the business card to a reputable police detective that the boys’ homeroom teacher had given her. She wasn’t leaving that building until she’d given Todoroki Enji a piece of her mind. And preferably her fist.

“Ah hello, I’m so sorry to bother you.” Inko smiled as they made it to the desk outside of Endeavor’s office where the man’s secretary sat. “I was hoping to get in to talk with Mr. Todoroki.”

The woman was quite the opposite of what Inko would have expected from the number two hero’s staff. She was petite, with wild blonde curls and a pair of cat-framed glasses in sharp cherry red. In all honesty, she looked a bit frazzled, like the man had already ran her ragged and it was only ten in the morning. “I’m sorry, do you have an appointment?”

“I don’t, no,” Inko said, feigning a pout. “My son is friends with little Shouto. I’m afraid it’s rather urgent. I promise it won’t take long but-“

“I’m sorry ma’am, but you can’t just show up without an appointment,” the secretary said, flustered as she shook her head frantically. “Endeavor-san is a very busy hero. Besides, he is spending the day with his son, so I’m afraid he doesn’t currently have time. If you’d like to schedule an appointment-“

Inko perked up, her eyes wide at the words. Something lurched in her throat at the idea that Shouto was in there on his own with his father. Katuski must have been thinking the same thing because he tensed beside her, his head shooting up to glare at the door. Unfortunately for her, her son didn’t have as much patience as she did, because he simply stormed forward and burst into the office without preamble.

“Katsuki!”

The office was rather plain, with shelves lining the walls and a large singular desk in the center of the farthest wall. Shouto was sat at a table on the other side of the room, what looked like homework spread out in front of him, and his eyes wide as he examined the two

Midoriya's who came barging in.

And then there was Endeavor.

Inko had seen him before of course, he was the number two hero for a reason. He was much larger in person however, with mountainous muscles and nearly twice her height. He was perhaps more intimidating in his hero costume, with his flames licking up around him like a constant threat and reminder of who he was.

But Inko wasn't scared of him.

"My apologies," she laughed, waving to where Katsuki was already sitting in the chair beside Shouto, the blonde ignoring whatever whispered words Shouto was trying to ask him. Inko let them be, turning towards the hero instead with an acrid smile. "Katsuki knows better than to simply barge into places, but I suppose he was excited."

"What is the meaning of this? I told you to cancel my appointments for the day," the man growled, turning his gaze to his frightened secretary instead.

Inko giggled and waved her hand at the secretary, working quickly to get Endeavor's attention back on herself. "Oh please, she knew nothing about this. Since you seem to be free however, I would love to sit down and speak to you about some things, Enji dear. Why don't we have a seat?" Watching Endeavor grow angry was almost an amusing sight. His eye twitched at the use of his given name and she could tell he wanted nothing more than to throw her out the window if he was allowed. Lucky for her, he wasn't. "Or," she continued with a shrug, patting down her skirt and digging through her purse in a feigned forgetfulness. After a moment, she tugged out the detective's card and hummed at it. "I suppose I could give Detective Tsukauchi a call. I understand it's more proper to go to the police first when pressing charges against someone, but I thought perhaps we could be adults about this and at least attempt to deal with this internally first. Yes?"

Inko dutifully ignored the shocked, almost fearful expression that Shouto gave Katsuki, instead keeping her gaze and her forced smile on Endeavor. She wouldn't let this man think she had any sort of weakness, not when her purpose here was so important.

"Um… sir?"

"I'll deal with this," Endeavor growled at the blonde woman, waving her off and slamming his office doors shut as soon as she was gone.

His glare turned to Inko and the woman was quite proud that she didn't even feel the need to flinch. "You are in dangerous territory, woman. I am the number two hero and you are trespassing."

Inko laughed, tucking the business card back into her purse before moving to sit in the chair placed before the man's desk. She kept her back straight, perched on the edge of the chair in case she needed to move quickly. He may be a hero, but Inko did not think for one second they were safe within this building. Not with what she knew about the man. She waved towards the man's chair and raised an eyebrow. "Hardly. Please, have a seat. Let's discuss what I want in return for me not pressing charges."

"Charges against *what*," the man spat, his dangerous hands fisting at his sides as he glared at the woman.

"Mrs. Midoriya," Shouto said hesitantly from behind her.

She simply shot him a comforting smile before waving to her son. "Katsuki, darling, come here, won't you? Show Enji what happened on Friday at the sports festival." By the way the man tensed across from her, Inko had the suspicion he knew exactly what she was about to show him, but he didn't interrupt as her son pushed himself out of his chair and stalked up to them. She couldn't help but be grateful that the boy had enough decency in him to keep the cocky smirk on his face to a minimum.

They all watched as Katsuki tugged off the green camo hoodie he was wearing, revealing just a short sleeved t-shirt and the burnt handprints across his throat and wrist.

They had healed very well over the weekend, the swelling having gone down thanks to the burn cream Shouto had lent them and the redness not quite as bright. But they were still fresh and angry looking, still churned the fury that boiled in Inko's gut.

Just the idea that anyone, much less a pro hero, had the *audacity* to lay hands on her son- or any child for that matter- had Inko ready to plot a murder. (However, a brief conversation with Aizawa had informed her that murder was in fact a crime and she would most definitely be arrested. Part of her still thought it'd be worth it.)

"You're blackmailing me," Endeavor grumbled, finally taking a seat across from her as he glared at the scarring on Katsuki's throat.

"Oh no," Inko assured him, shaking her head. "No, Enji, this isn't

blackmail. This is a threat." The man tensed, as did the two boys in the room, but Inko continued on as if she hadn't noticed. "You see, Enji, what you did was assault a *child*. Katsuki here is only fifteen. He's a minor, and you? You're not only an adult who should know better, but you're a *pro hero*. Imagine what your rankings will look like when I show the world what you did to my son. Imagine what the people will think when I press charges on you for *attacking a child* and leaving him with a permanent scar." Endeavor opened his mouth to argue, but Inko held up a sharp finger, all of her false excitement and politeness gone, replaced now with anger and resentment. She might be slightly terrified of the man, but she would *not* let him bully or intimidate her. "And then imagine," she continued, raising her eyebrows to make sure he was paying attention, "what might come to light when I suggest they look into your home life. What might come to light if I tell someone that my son was only defending his friend when you attacked him. Defending *your son*."

The silence in the room was almost suffocating.

Inko could feel the heat blazing off the hero, making her sweat a bit from the intensity of it. And gods, he looked *infuriated.* There was a mix of surprise and anger on his face, and Inko had the brief wonder of what Katsuki thought it smelled like. Not very good if the wrinkle of his nose was anything to go by.

She could tell he was debating the likelihood of her story, trying to determine if she'd actually go through with the threat or not.

"A single burn and the word of a child is hardly proof," he tried, but Inko just smiled.

"That is true. I'm sure you have an army of lawyers that would love to pick Katsuki's story apart," she agreed. "It'd be hard to argue video evidence however." Endeavor's eyes widened at that, his fire sputtering in surprise and Inko knew then that she had him. "You forget that UA is a very prestigious school, Enji. They take their students safety very seriously so there are cameras placed in all of the main hallways of the school and any location a school event may be happening. Now, I have not yet asked for these tapes because I think we can come to an agreement without alerting the school of your actions, but there are those in the school who would help me without question to get that tape. My other son is quite close with Principal Nezu, you see, and I've become good friends with Katsuki's homeroom teacher." Which was mostly true. She'd quite enjoyed conversing with Aizawa and his husband Friday night after she'd been filled in at the

shop, and they'd exchanged numbers so she could keep in contact with them in regards to Katsuki and the boys. "So you should be aware that I'm not bluffing."

By now, Shouto had stood and stepped forward, hovering just behind Katsuki like he wanted to step in but wasn't sure how. She was glad he didn't, because she wasn't quite done.

"What do you want?"

And here came the moment of truth, because even Katsuki didn't quite know what Inko's plan had been when they'd walked into the agency. Inko herself hadn't really known up until that morning when she'd officially made the decision. Because this wasn't just about her son, but about Endeavor's as well.

"I want Shouto."

She could feel the temperature change instantly. The way it cooled behind her where Shouto was stood in shock, and the way it flickered and flared in front of her with Endeavor's surprise. Even Katsuki was staring at her with wide eyes, his mouth hanging open.

It took a moment for any kind of reaction. A solid minute passed before the hero slammed his hands down on the desk and shot to his feet, looming over her like a giant. Inko forced herself not to flinch.

He couldn't hurt her, she knew that. He might want to, but he knew just as well as she did that he couldn't. That she had him right where she wanted him and he no doubt *hated* it.

"You want *my son*?"

Inko smiled at him and nodded, knowing the expression would only serve to anger him more. "I do. I'm not an idiot, Enji. I know what happens behind closed doors. I know there's a reason Shouto likes to stay at my house whenever he can. Katsuki has expressed his concern to me before, but I had no proof. I still don't," she shrugged, taking a deep breath before pushing herself to her feet. She shifted her purse on her shoulder and blinked up at the man. "But now I have something to threaten you with."

"You think-"

"Now, I'd originally come here to threaten you into leaving Shouto alone," she interrupted as she turned to the boy in question, taking his

face into her hands and turning it this way and that, searching for any sign of injury. He was still staring at her in shock, like he wasn't quite sure if she was serious or not. But there was fear in those eyes too- fear of what his father might do, fear that she was just kidding, fear of the hope he wanted to feel but didn't know how. "But, I don't think I trust you to keep that promise," she continued, turning back towards Endeavor now and taking Shouto's hand in hers. "So sit down and let me tell you what I want."

It was clear he didn't want to do as she ordered, clear by the way his muscles coiled and his fists clenched. But still, he let out a wild growl and dropped himself into his chair, waving a hand at her. "Go on then."

"Good boy," she said, teasing the line between them and feeling a tendril of amusement tickling her chest at the scandalized look he sent her. "Now, ultimately I'll leave the decision to Shouto. I won't force him to come live with us if he doesn't want to, but I want it to be an option for him. Our boys are all quite close and they go to the same school. Shouto will be held to the same expectations I hold my boys to in the matter of grades, school work, and training." She held up a quick finger as the man opened his mouth, showing she wasn't done. "I don't care if it's not up to your training standards. It will be to the standards of his *teachers* and what they think is safe for him to participate in."

Inko patted Shouto's hand again as she felt him tense, but she didn't take her eyes off Endeavor. "If Shouto does decide to come home with me, then you will not be allowed to visit. If he has someone he trusts to come check in on him, then that is fine. But I will not allow you near any of my kids again after today," she said sharply.

A small tug at her hand had Inko turning to look up at Shouto and he blushed slightly. "My sister, Fuyumi…" he mumbled.

Inko nodded. "Then Fuyumi it is. She can visit to make sure Shouto is safe and doing well, but you will not be allowed to," she reiterated. "I will not hesitate to get a restraining order on you if you decide to break that agreement."

"You think you have any right to take my son away from me?" Endeavor tested, though she could sense in his voice that he knew he couldn't say no.

"And you think you have any right to abuse children and get away

with it?" She countered, earning a snort from her son. "The only reason I'm not directly taking you to court for what you did to Katsuki is because of Shouto. From what I understand, he would rather your home life not come to light, and I am inclined to honor that request. However, I will not hesitate to do it anyway if you give me a reason."

There was a long silence after that, broken only by the heavy breathing of the hero as he tried so desperately to control his anger. There was a moment when his gaze fell on Shouto and Inko took a tiny step to the side to shield the boy, despite her being a good head shorter than him. Still, she didn't budge.

"Shouto?" Endeavor questioned, glaring at his son.

Inko could feel him tense behind her, his fingers tightening around her own and she suspected he would be clinging to Katsuki if he didn't want to out himself to his father and create even more issues.

She gave him the time to consider the option, feeling him let out a breath behind her and take a tiny step to the side so he wasn't hiding behind her. His voice was quiet when he spoke.

"I… would like to go with Mrs. Midoriya."

A weight she hadn't known she'd been carrying lifted off Inko's chest and she barely managed to conceal her relief. Even Katsuki beside her seemed to slump into himself, a small smile tugging at his lips as he stared at his boyfriend. So, taking a deep breath, she turned back towards Endeavor and straightened her back, glaring at him.

"That settles it then," she says easily. "I'll take Shouto home to gather his things and he'll move in with me and the boys. I will inform the school of his change in address and inform them that you are no longer allowed at school events unless absolutely necessary. You can watch them at home like everyone else," she informed him, her confidence at having Shouto's approval keeping her steady. "Should I find out that you've broken any of our agreements without previously informing me, then I will not hesitate to contact the police. In addition," she said carefully, folding her hands in front of her in feigned politeness, "Detective Tsukauchi is aware of the situation and has everything he needs in case you decide to do something stupid." The man sneered and Inko took a deep breath. "Well, if there's nothing else, I think it's about time for lunch, isn't it boys?"

She didn't let the hero answer before shuffling the boys out of the office, pausing only long enough for Shouto to gather his things, and

then they were gone.

Shouto wasn't sure what to feel.

There was a hurricane of emotions in his chest and he felt tense and paranoid the entire drive to the soba place near his house. Katsuki was practically beaming beside him, not seeming bothered that Shouto was squeezing the life out of his hand, and Mrs. Midoriya was silent in the front seat.

He couldn't help thinking this was all too good to be true. That his father would come to his sense and come barreling towards them with all the force of a firestorm to take him back. Shouto was his masterpiece, his legacy. The boy had a hard time believing he'd just given up like that.

It didn't hurt to know that the man had given in. Shouto knew long ago that his father didn't care about him like normal parents did, so the fact that he'd just given up wasn't what bothered Shouto. What bothered him was that it'd seemed to go so easily. So smoothly. Was that all it really took to get him out of that house?

Someone to help?

He couldn't help but wonder what might have happened if he'd told the police when he was younger. Couldn't help but wonder if Touya would still be alive, if his mom would still be at home, smiling and cooking like she'd always loved to do. Would Natsuo be happier? Fuyumi less stressed?

They'd been scared for so long… for so long he'd thought that no one could help. That he had to deal with it on his own. He was the youngest child, the last one. He didn't have to worry about the others anymore, not like Touya did. He just had to bear it until he was old enough to get out.

But then Katsuki came along and Izuku and their mother.

Their mother…

She was willing to stand up for a kid who wasn't even hers. Just because her son's cared, just because what Endeavor was doing was *wrong*.

Outside of his siblings, it was hard for him to imagine anyone actually

cared enough to help. Even with his boyfriends, who'd said time and time again that they wanted to do something, Shouto had never believed that they *could*. He never believed anyone could. Endeavor was a hero, a top ten hero. He was one of the most powerful men in the country and Mrs. Midoriya had just… walked all over him like it was nothing to her.

Just because she cared.

"Shouto, sweetie, I'm sorry to have sprung all of that on you without warning," the green-haired woman said once they'd taken their seats in a private booth and taken their orders. He was pressed up against Katsuki, reveling in the heat the boy put off and the comfort that came with his presence. He blinked up at the woman and her gentle smile. "We didn't actually know you were going to be there."

He shook his head, taking Katsuki's hand once more underneath the table and sucking in a short breath. "No, it's fine, I- I…"

"It's okay," she said knowingly, reaching over to pat his hand where it clenched around his chopsticks. "You don't have to be okay, you know? I tell my boys this all time, but it's okay to feel sad. It's okay to be afraid, because you'll always have someone there to help you through it."

Katsuki's hand squeezed his, and though he didn't say anything, Shouto knew it was his way of agreeing with the words.

Shouto bobbed his head, eyes trained on the bowl of soba that was placed in front of him. "Thank you," he whispered.

"Your welcome," she responded, patting his hand once more before pulling away to focus on her own food. "Oh, I should have asked this while we were there, but your sister- do I need to worry about her as well?"

Shouto jolted at the question and he frowned up at her. "No! No, Fuyumi practically raised me after Tou- um… I mean she's never hurt me or anything. I promise."

Something like pity settled over the woman's face and she shook her head. "No, sweetheart, I meant do I need to worry about her safety," she clarified, bringing confusion to Shouto's face. "I find it hard to believe that your father only abused you when he has three children."

Oh.

“Oh… um… no, Fuyumi and Natsuo are older. She- she only stayed to take care of me when dad wasn’t home,” he said with a shrug, swirling his noodles in his bowl. “He’s never cared about them much. Her quirk isn’t strong enough to matter to him and neither is Natsuo’s.” He shook his head and frowned. “It was just me and Touya he cared about.”

Katsuki jolted at the name and Mrs. Midoriya frowned, looking like she was trying to figure out if she knew it or not.

“Touya?”

Shouto bobbed his head, swallowing around the lump forming in his throat. He suspected Katsuki knew the story already. He and Izuku didn’t usually keep things from each other, though the greenette might have kept this. He wasn’t sure.

“My oldest brother,” Shouto said slowly. “He… died when I was a kid.” Mrs. Midoriya didn’t ask how, but she didn’t need to. Shouto had no doubt she could read it on his face, read it in the way Katsuki was fuming at his side. “We both had fire quirks, and with me having ice too- well, my father started training us early. He didn’t focus much on Yumi or Natsu.”

Mrs. Midoriya sighed and nodded. “I’m glad. And if you don’t mind, your mother?”

He tensed at that and put his chopsticks down carefully, suddenly not hungry. “She’s… at the hospital,” he told her.

“Sho- you don’t have to,” Katsuki said quietly at his side, but Shouto shook his head.

If she was taking him in, then she deserved to know. And so did Katsuki.

“It’s okay,” he assured them, trying for a smile but knowing it fell short. “My scar,” he said, gesturing towards it, “it was from her. It wasn’t her fault,” he rushed to defend upon seeing the surprised anger on Mrs. Midoriya’s face. “It truly wasn’t. My father… abused her as well. I don’t blame her for what happened but- but… well I haven’t visited her since then. Dad would never let me. Yumi and Natsuo see her a lot, they say she’s doing better. And I write to her when I can. But she’s not stable enough to come home even if she wanted to.”

Mrs. Midoriya smiled that kind smile again, the one that sent

butterflies rumbling in his stomach, and nodded. “Well I’d love to meet her one day. Maybe we can go visit her if you’d like.”

And that was only the beginning of all the kindness that the Midoriya’s thrust upon him.

They’d picked Izuku up on their way to Shouto’s home so he could help the boy pack. Fuyumi had been extremely confused to say the least about the whole situation, but as soon as it was explained she’d burst into tears and dragged Mrs. Midoriya into a hug tight enough to send the woman sputtering. Katsuki and Izuku got hugs as well, though the former looked like he had no idea what to do and just ended up patting Fuyumi’s back awkwardly.

They spent the rest of the Sunday moving him into the Midoriya household.

There was an extra room that served as an office that Shouto was offered, but after a scoff from Katsuki and a roll of the eyes from Izuku, it’d been agreed that he would just share their room since they shared already. Their mother was unsatisfied with that however, and decided an entire switch up was needed. Considering she was only one person, and they were three, the boys were given the master bedroom and Mrs. Midoriya was moved into theirs.

Things had to be moved around and beds were replaced with one large futon, but in the end Shouto didn’t have many things so he didn’t take up much extra room. Mrs. Midoriya, (*“Please sweetie, you can call me Momma Inko,”)* had promised that they could go shopping the next weekend for anything Shouto would need, on the grounds that the boys would need at *least* a bigger dresser and it’d give her an excuse to use the credit card that Fuyumi had given her in Endeavor’s name.

At some point that night she had sat them down for a *talk* which consisted of a lot of yelling from Katsuki, sputtering from Izuku, and silent embarrassment from Shouto. Still, Momma Inko decided that if they were going to be living together *and* dating, that a *talk* was in order.

He supposed out of everything that’d happened that day, it was the least surprising.

And for the first time in a long time, Shouto found himself smiling as he fell asleep. Knowing that he didn’t have to listen for heavy footsteps or shouting. Knowing he wouldn’t wake up from buckets of

ice water or impromptu training excersises.

For once, he could just sleep.

Chapter End Notes

Weeeeee! Our boys are finally together for good. Poor little Shouto.
Anyway, hope everyone liked the chapter. I know we wanted him to get punched or something, but like- Inko is smarter than that. He shows up again though and she wont hesitate to throw down.

As always, lots of loving and stay safe out there! Drink water, relax, breathe.

Chapter 23: Silenced

Chapter Summary

Katsuki is a wreck and Shinsou doesn't know what affection is.

Chapter Notes

Because I don't know how NOT TO WRITE ANGST.
I promise we'll get some more fluff soon I just have to get all the heavy stuff out of the way!

TRIGGER WARNINGS: abuse, kind of panic attacks?, forced silence via muzzles

cough cough also maybe check out the prequel spin off to this story called 'A Cat with a Human Heart'. It's part two in the series.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

With Shouto finally out of that damned house, all that was left for him now was Shinsou.

Once he'd woken up after the attack, he'd been pretty loose with answers about being a yokai. The entire pack was still there, asking questions, bombarding both Shinsou and Katsuki with the need for information, but Katsuki was focused on the other boy. The boy who *knew* the whole time what Katsuki was, or suspected at the very least. The boy who was supposedly his secret body guard or whatever the fuck. He still wasn't quite sure how Satori fit in with Kitsune, but thinking about it too much hurt his head.

Point was, Katsuki had been avoiding staring too hard at Shinsou's fog up until recently, but for the week after the Sports Festival, it'd only been getting worse and worse until Katsuki felt the need to vomit if he got too close to the other boy. It was infuriating.

The protectiveness the fox felt over his pack was overwhelming, enough so that he couldn't focus in class if they were too far away from him, he couldn't stand there during training and watch as they got hurt, he wouldn't even let anyone get close to their table during lunch without growling in warning.

And it was all Shinsou's fault.

“What’s going on?” Mr. Aizawa asked finally later that week, having no doubt noticed how irritated and… primal Katsuki had been. “You’ve been acting strangely and it’s affecting your grades.”

And Katsuki didn’t *want* to tell him the truth, mostly because he himself wasn’t even quite sure what was happening, but there was an itch under his skin that he couldn’t get rid of, and talking to the other yokai usually seemed to help him figure these kinds of things out.

“When I came to your house,” he started, grinding his teeth around the words because even now the idea that he wasn’t around the pack was grating on his nerves. “I told you there was someone who needed help.” The teacher nodded, eyes narrowing at the words. “Well, I fixed one of them. We got him out of the house so he’s okay now.”

Aizawa bobbed his head, lips still pulled into a grimace. “Yes, your mother told me about Todoroki’s new living arrangements. I’m glad.”

Katsuki didn’t bother questioning how Aizawa and Momma Inko were friends now. Instead he focused on the way his leg bounced under his desk, the way his skin felt like it was crawling with bugs, the way he could *sense* the others out there in the café waiting for him. He clenched his teeth again. “But there was another person who needed help and I haven’t- I haven’t managed to figure out why yet.”

“Have you looked at their fog?”

Katsuki shook his head. “It feels too much like- like I’m reading someone’s diary without their permission,” he said, glancing at the fog around Aizawa’s heart in accusation.

They’d been training his memory reading skills all week, and the week before (with what little time they had between the festival training). He’d been getting better at managing it, learning quickly, the teachers had said. It was touch and go sometimes. Sometimes the memories were too sharp and focused, sometimes they were dull and soft. But still, even now he could stare at Aizawa’s fog and not be bothered. He could still sense the scene behind the trauma, still hear the screams and feel the dust settling on his skin, but it was easy to put to the back of his mind.

He'd been practicing with Shouto too- with the boy’s permission of course- and it was easier to focus on just watching instead of living through the events. It was with Shouto that Katsuki discovered he could *resummon* the fog if he wanted to. That touching it gave him the full picture and let the memory fade away from his attention now that

he knew, but if he focused hard enough on *seeing* the trauma, he could see the fog around Shouto's eye again. It made for good practice.

"It's been getting worse though," the blonde continued. "Leading up to the sports festival it's like it faded so much I could barely see it, but now it's back and- and it's hard to focus on *anything* other than the need to look. And it's-" he shifted in his seat, shivering slightly at the feeling of the fox shifting under his skin. "*Fuck*, it's like it's making the fox even more protective than normal. Just sitting here right now is making me itch."

The pro hero hummed, leaning back in his chair with a frown, crossing his arms over his chest. "Kitsune are very territorial creatures," he began, and Katsuki was reminded of how grateful he was that the other man was a yokai. Because how Katsuki could get answers that Auntie Hinko had never been able to give him. Where previously he'd only get half answers, now he had access to the real thing. It was a relief to say the least. "They are structured in clans," the man continued. "You for example are technically part of the Suki clan. Think of a clan like… an empire, or a kingdom. Your mother is the head of your clan, the Queen. But individual Kitsune can, and often do, form packs within the clan. Generally, they're only with other Kitsune, though occasionally the stronger will add other yokai to their pack."

"Were you a part of my mother's pack?" Katsuki asked, suddenly engrossed in the idea of getting any information about his family.

"Technically I was her… employee. Sort of. It's complicated," Aizawa grimaced, waving a hand around. "I was basically what Shinsou is to you. Her body guard, her advisor, but… also her best friend, I guess. Not the point, the point is that yes, if you ask Mitsuki, I was part of her pack. See, Kitsune don't choose their clan, but they can choose their pack. A pack is stronger than blood to them, so it's understandable how dangerous Kitsune can get when one of their pack members is in danger or hurting. No doubt, your fox is reacting to the fact that you know of a danger but are doing nothing to stop it."

"But I don't fucking know-"

The teacher raised a hand to stop his yelling and he rolled his white eyes. "I'm not blaming you, Midoriya. I'm saying that it's in your instincts to protect, and your fox currently thinks your slacking on that duty. It's why you're… what did you say, itchy?" Katsuki sneered and Aizawa frowned, rubbing at one of his eyes with a sigh. "It

probably doesn't help that you're unbonded."

The word was unfamiliar to him, but something about it made the fox in him growl.

Aizawa raised an eyebrow at the sound, but didn't scold him. "In Ikai, kitsune packs go through a bonding ceremony. It's usually done when a new member joins the pack. It binds that member to the spirit of the pack, to the essence of it. Mitsuki and I were bonded so young, I don't really remember the whole process of it, but it's essential to strengthen packs back in the Ikai." He shifted his head back and forth as he thought for a moment. "Tell me, if you focus right now, can you sense them? Each of them, individually?"

Katsuki frowned, but nodded anyway. It was something he'd been able to do since the USJ, since he admitted he actually had a pack. It wasn't very strong, and was pretty much only when they were nearby, but he could smell them, sense their stress, their happiness, their excitement.

"Being bonded is like that, but ten times stronger," Aizawa told him with a shrug. "And it goes both ways. Once a pack is bonded, they're able to sense each other. It's a defense mechanism, a way for them to know if the others are in danger."

It made sense, since Katsuki could sense during the USJ that the others were okay or in trouble. "Can you sense Mitsuki then?"

The man shook his head and frowned. "Not right now. Mitsuki is in the Ikai and the bond isn't nearly strong enough to cross the veil between worlds. I would know if something drastic happened, like if she died or got seriously injured, and I'd know if she crossed back over here, but past that I can't really sense her."

"So, will bonding with the pack make it not be so possessive? The fox, I mean?"

"It's possible," the man answered vaguely. "As much as you hate to hear it, you and Shinsou are anomalies. A lot of things I know about the yokai might not apply to you since you're hybrids. That being said, it's definitely possible that bonding with the pack will help you like it does for other Kitsune. It could serve as the tether you need if you're unsure they're okay. You may even be able to communicate with them when you're not near each other, as long as you're in the same realm. Honestly, I'm not sure since you're only half-blooded. But," he said quickly when Katsuki opened his mouth to respond.

Aizawa held up a hand and something like concern twisted on his features for a moment. “This isn’t something to take lightly. Not only is a bond for life, but I’ve never seen one done with a human, much less seven of them. I have no idea how it will affect them, or if it’ll even work.”

And Katsuki thought about that, he really did. There was no way he was going to put them in danger just to get rid of the annoying itch under his skin. But at the same time… something in him told him it’d be okay. Something told him that this is what they needed, this is *important* and he had to do it. The pack would be fine. The pack would be *stronger* for it, better, *safer*.

“If you want to do it, I will help you,” the hero said a bit reluctantly and Katsuki sat up straight in his chair. “It’ll take preparation, and a *long* discussion with the others to make sure they all know what they’re getting into and know what to expect. I won’t do it if even a single one of them says no. It won’t be worth it and it might even cause more pain to you if one of them isn’t bonded. But if it’s something you want to do, then I’ll help.”

“Why?” Katsuki couldn’t help but ask, frown tugging at his lips as he tried not to glower at the man. “Why are you helping me so much? I get the abuse thing, you’re our teacher. You’re a hero. You help people. But this is going beyond the normal call of duty,” he accused.

Aizawa sighed and rubbed at his eyes again. “You’re right. But I owe it to your mother, and I owe it to you. When you were born, Mitsuki came to me and asked me to take you in. I told her no. At the time we couldn’t take care of a kid, hell we could barely take care of ourselves. I’m glad Inko took you in, it’s done you a lot of good and she’s a great mother, but I still feel guilty for turning you away.”

“And it’s a pack thing too, isn’t it?” Katsuki guessed, waving towards himself with a frown. “Because I’m related or whatever?”

“A clan thing, more like,” he shrugged. “My life used to mean nothing but to serve the clan, to serve your mother. She released me from that when I decided to stay here instead of returning to the Ikai with her. But regardless of your personal feelings or my location, you are her son. You’re the heir to the clan and even if you don’t want it, it’s my job to make sure you’re okay. It’s my job to help you.”

Katsuki snorted and rolled his eyes, something uncomfortable settling in his stomach. “You make it sound like a duty or something. Like a

job, not like you fucking care or something."

"I don't see why it can't be both," is what he said in response. "Talk to the pack, see what they think about everything. If they want to do it, then we can get together and discuss it in more detail. I'll need to take a trip to the Ikai for supplies, but that's a matter for another time."

Katsuki did want to do it. He really did. Something about it felt right in his chest, settled somewhere between his skin and the fox. Almost like just the idea of being bonded calmed the raging unrest within him. Still… he was reminded of the entire reason he was there in the first place, the entire reason he's struggling with anything.

He paused in the doorway of the classroom, hands shoved in his pockets and muscles tensed as he tried to make a decision.

Technically, Shinsou had never asked Katsuki not to say anything, but then again, he also didn't know about the fog like Shouto had. He didn't know that Katsuki could sense the overwhelming suffocation that surrounded the boy, that he could feel the cold press of metal against his face whenever Shinsou passed him by. He didn't know what it was still, but it was too strong to ignore and the idea of letting it continue brought that protectiveness raising its head again, clawing at Katsuki's ribs like a rabid dog.

"It's Shinsou," he said quietly, not turning to look at the teacher as if not facing him meant he wasn't betraying one of his best friends. "I don't know what's happening, but he has a fog around his mouth, like he's wearing a mask or something. It's real bad today."

He waited a few seconds without turning before he heard a sigh.

"Thank you for telling me. I'll look into it."

A weight felt lifted off his shoulders and Katsuki found it easier to breathe now as he walked towards the café for lunch. He knew Aizawa would do as he promised, he knew he'd dig around and if Shinsou was being hurt then he'd do something about it. Katsuki trusted the pro, sometimes more than he trusted himself.

But he knew Shinsou would be okay.

Shouto would be okay.

The pack would be *okay*.

“Shouta, my dear, my darling, light of my life and my sun and stars-“

“Oh my god, shut *up*-“

“Please tell me, oh dearest one, *why* you are looking at an adoption agency and foster home when you explicitly told me three years ago that you definitely, one hundred percent, absolutely did not want children. *Ever*.”

Shouta groaned, dropping his face into his hands and pushing the paperwork aside. He scrubbed at his eyes as if the mere action would make his husband’s image disappear. Spoiler alert, it didn’t. Still, while Hizashi looked mildly confused and a bit offended, he also looked excited and curious as he peaked over Shouta’s shoulder to see what he was looking at.

“Midoriya Katsuki thinks Shinsou is being abused at home,” he grumbled, getting straight to the point. There was no need to lie to his husband, and much to his relief, and disappointment, the excited look on the blonde’s face fell immediately. He took a quick seat beside Shouta and frowned, waiting for him to continue. “He’s been seeing a lot of fog around Shinsou’s mouth apparently and it comes and goes. It’s been worse recently, he said and he thinks something is happening at home to cause it.”

Hizashi nodded, all serious now as he gestured towards the paperwork. “And the foster home?”

“It’s where Shinsou lives. I dug through his file a little,” Shouta sighed. “He’s been bounced around in the system a *lot* since his grandmother died when he was a kid. Never stayed in one home for longer than a couple of months before moving on to the next.”

“But why?”

Shouta’s fists clenched and he glared at the papers in hopes of lighting them on fire. Sadly, they remained unburnt. “Apparently foster parents don’t like his quirk. Most of the ones who requested he be moved were because they thought him too dangerous to be near the other kids despite the fact that he never actually used his quirk on the others. The home he’s at now has been his longest stint, almost a year now. It’s close by.”

He said it like it was a question, white eyes finding green in the hopes that the other man would understand where he was going with this. Lucky for him, Hizashi was a genius at reading Shouta Expressions.

“Well, what do you say we make a house call?” The blonde grinned. “Shinsou’s a quiet kid, I doubt he’d tell us straight out, and with what’s happened with Todoroki recently, it’d be easy to play it off as us just checking in with all our students.”

Brilliant, Shouta though as he watched his husband. He hadn’t even thought of a reason to stop by, was just planning on watching the house from afar like the underground hero he was. But this way at least they could scare the foster parents into letting them in, would show Shinsou too that there was someone in his corner if he did need help. “Nezu would back us up if the family called,” Shouta said surely. “I didn’t tell him what Midoriya said, but he’d back us up if needed.”

Shouta didn’t bother telling Hizashi how attached to the student he already was. He’d been personally training him for months, ever since he’d joined class 1-A. Since he hadn’t passed the physical entrance exam due to the nature of his quirk, he had a severe disadvantage to the other students. He had little to no hand to hand experience, and his quirk relied so heavily on a response that he would *need* something more to help him.

In fact, Hizashi had joked around about adopting the boy before considering he was, as his husband said, a ‘mini-Shouta’, coffee addiction and all.

So that’s how Shouta and Hizashi found themselves at the Ito residence, both dressed in their hero costumes and ready to wreak havoc if needed.

A short, terrifyingly thin woman answered the door when Hizashi knocked, tanned, with bright green hair and matching eyes. Shouta couldn’t tell by looking at her what her quirk was, but he knew from the files that it had something to do with plant manipulation of some kind. There were two children playing in the living room behind her, but no sign of the boy they’d come to inquire about.

“Yes? Hello?”

Shouta didn’t smile, but he bowed slightly towards the woman and Hizashi followed suit. “Hello, ma’am. Pardon the intrusion but we’re here on behalf of Shinsou Hitoshi.”

The woman blinked, her eyes widening at the words and her body tensing slightly. Like she hadn’t ever expected that particular question from him. “Hitoshi? Well… he isn’t here right now. May I ask what this is about?”

“We’re his teachers,” Hizashi said with a smile, waving brightly at the curious children who were watching them over the edge of the couch. Luckily the man kept his voice at a normal level, but his smile was almost sickeningly sweet. A fake smile, the one he only used when he was trying really hard to be polite. “We’re just doing a routine check in with all of our students. Welfare and house calls and all that, I’m sure you understand. Do you mind if we come in?” It wasn’t a question, especially since Hizashi simply sauntered through the door without waiting for permission. Which, you know, is hot- him being demanding and all- but definitely not professional. Shouta sighed before following.

It wasn’t until he was inside the home- which granted looked very well kept and neat- that Shouta smelt it. He scolded himself for taking so long to notice, but once he’d entered it hit him like a ton of bricks.

Tears.

Familiar tears too. It wasn’t a surprise that Shouta could smell Shinsou in the house considering the boy lived there, but the scent of his tears were fresh. New. When he focused, he could hear the boy’s heartbeat from above them, from where he assumed the bedrooms were. The sharp scent of distress was obvious enough, Shouta didn’t need Katsuki’s keen sense for emotions to know that. It made him tense, made him worried, and he wanted nothing more than to storm upstairs and get to the bottom of everything.

“I’d like to speak with Shinsou please,” Shouta said in that deadpan way of his, leaving no room for argument. Hizashi meanwhile was exploring the first floor of the home, eagerly distracting the other two children who seemed to recognize him from the television.

“I told you,” Mrs. Ito frowned, the expression ugly on her thin face, “he isn’t here.”

Sighing, Shouta turned to face the woman, eyes narrowed and tired. “Ito-san, I would appreciate it if you didn’t lie to me. It’s not looking good for you. Now, I know Shinsou is upstairs, and I am going to go speak with him. You may stay here or not but it’s my job to make sure my students are safe at home and I’m going to do that. Mic,” he called, drawing his husband’s attention with his hero name and gesturing towards the stairs. “I’m going up.”

“No wait-“ the woman tried, something frantic in her voice that only made Shouta move faster.

There was a feeling deep in his gut telling him that something was wrong. He knew whatever Katsuki had been seeing around Shinsou had been bad, bad enough for the blonde to be physically sick around the other boy, bad enough that he'd asked Shouta for help. Shinsou never looked particularly traumatized other than the general lack of sleep he gave off, but Shouta knew better than anyone how easy it could be to hide behind masks.

He didn't quite know what he was expecting but it hadn't been this.

Shinsou was in the second door on the left, sitting on his bed with his knees pulled up to his chest and fresh tears streaming down his face. At first glance, Shouta could have easily thought that nothing was wrong. There was no obvious bruises on his skin, his room was clean and well furnished, nothing seemed out of the ordinary… until the boy lifted his head and turned to face the door.

Shouta saw red, his entire vision clouding with barely contained fury and his fists clenching at his sides. Because never in his life had he seen something so… so disgusting.

"You. Put. A. Muzzle. On. My. Kid."

It wasn't a question, and he kept his voice quiet despite the anger in his chest because Shinsou was staring at him with big, frightened eyes. Like he wasn't sure what to think about his teacher being there. Like he wasn't sure if he was being punished or rescued. The muzzle around his face was clearly digging into his skin, fitting under his chin and over his cheeks in order to make it impossible for the boy to speak at all. There didn't seem to be anything else on him- no cuffs or restraints- and the boy lowered his legs to sit criss-cross as Aizawa took a step closer to him. He didn't flinch, but it was clear the boy was trying desperately to try and get ahold of himself, to get back to the suave, uncaring mask he usually wore.

"It's not-"

"It is exactly what it looks like," the pro interrupted, turning towards the woman with a sharp hiss. She stepped away from him but Aizawa didn't let her get far before he held out his hand expectantly. "You're going to give me the key right now, you're going to stand over here, and you're going to wait until I tell you that you can move. Do you understand?" The woman bobbed her head wildly, tears forming in her own eyes as she handed over a key from her pocket. Shouta didn't care if she started sobbing right there, the only thing on his mind

being his student. Part of him wanted nothing more than to rush forward and tug the boy into a hug, but the other, more logical part knew that Shinsou was terrified right now and that might only make it worse.

Instead, he took slow and careful steps towards Shinsou who looked like he'd managed to calm himself down some but was still unsure of what was happening. His eyes met Shouta's and this time he did flinch when the man reached out towards him. He paused, hands hanging in the air and he twisted one to show off the key. Shinsou's eyes found it immediately before turning back to Shouta. "It's okay," he assured the boy, not that it looked like he believed him. "Kid, you aren't in trouble, you aren't being punished anymore. Mic is downstairs, we're getting you out of here."

The boy blinked back tears again before shrinking backwards against the wall behind the bed, his eyes finding his foster parent's over Shouta's shoulder.

He wasn't sure how to get the boy to trust him, not right now. They'd grown close over the past couple months of training and school, but he still didn't even know a thing about the boy other than the fact that he was equally obsessed with cats as Shouta was. He'd hoped the boy had grown to trust him, but perhaps not.

Or maybe he's too fucking traumatized right now to understand what's happening. Do something you idiot. Reassure him.

"Katsuki sent me."

He wasn't sure what made him say it, but his talk with the eldest Midoriya sibling earlier that day was echoing in his mind. The talk about a pack, about a bond they didn't yet have. How it could help the kitsune control himself more.

Regardless of why he said it, it seemed to do the trick because Shinsou's eyes met his again, searching for a lie, before his shoulders slumped. New tears trickled down his face, but he still tipped himself forward until he was resting his forehead on Shouta's chest, so the hero considered it a win. Plus, the position gave him the perfect angle to release the muzzle.

"I'm just going to take this off, okay?" He said before moving his arms. Shinsou nodded, holding his breath until the cage dropped into their laps with a soft clang. His next breath came out on the back of a sob and Shouta couldn't help himself that time. He wrapped his arms

around the boy and held him close to his chest, not caring in the slightest when he clung to Shouta like his life depended on it.

They stayed like that for a while, he wasn't sure how long- time was still a strange concept to him in this realm, no matter how long he stayed in it- but it was long enough for his husband to come searching for them. He took in the room with a worried glance, his confusion settling first on the cowering Mrs. Ito in the corner, then to where Shinsou was wrapped up in Shouta's arms. The boy had reduced himself to soft sniffles by now, the sobs having run their course and the tears having finally stopped. But he didn't let go, so neither did Shouta.

At his husband's questioning face, he reached down to grab the muzzle before tossing it at the blonde's feet.

Hizashi didn't need to ask any more questions, didn't need to say anything at all. Shouta could see the devastation and fury in Hizashi's face, a fury deeper than anything he'd ever seen on the man. Before Shouta could even blink, Hizashi was dragging the woman out of the room, ignoring her tears, and mumbling quietly about calling the police and taking her fostering license away.

Shouta let him leave, not daring to move away from Shinsou until he was ready.

"You can-" the boy paused, clearing his throat so his words weren't so ragged. "You can let go now. I'm-I'm okay."

Shouta didn't, because Shinsou didn't. After a few more minutes, he felt a gentle push on his chest and he let himself drop his arms and back up a bit. Shinsou kept his head down, scrubbing at his eyes to get the dried tears off his eyelashes, and Shouta was patient, not wanting to push.

When his student dropped his arms into his lap and took a deep, steady breath, the pro decided now was as best a time as any to get some answers. "How long have you been wearing that?"

Shinsou shrugged. "My whole life?"

"That's not-" Shouta froze, blinking in surprise. "Every family has done this to you?"

"Most of them," Shinsou answered quietly, turning his head to stare out the window beside them at the darkened streets. "Some of them

didn't, but I'd get punished if I spoke. Others just weren't around enough to care." He scratched at the indents on his cheeks and cleared his throat again. "If- if you meant today, just- just since I got home."

Shouta's fists clenched in his lap as he struggled to keep a steady hold on his temper. "And why were you being punished tonight?"

Purple eyes turned to him, swimming with confusion under a wrinkled brow. "I wasn't. That's just the rule," he answered, shrugging like it meant that everything was fine even though it most definitely wasn't. "I have to wear it anytime I'm home unless I'm eating. It's not usually this bad," he tried to defend, gesturing towards his eyes to indicate his tears. "I just- I think Katsuki is mad at me and I couldn't figure out why and it just- it sent me into a panic because I wanted to call him and ask but I- I couldn't."

"Why did you think he was mad?"

Shinsou sniffled again. "B-because he's barely looked at me all week? Because he won't sit next to me unless he has to?"

Taking a deep breath, Shouta reached out slowly, telegraphing every movement as he pulled the boy back into a hug. "He's not mad at you," the man assured him, running his fingers through the boy's unruly hair like Hizashi did to him when he was struggling. "One of the downsides to Midoriya's heritage is that he can see trauma. Not every Kitsune can do it, in fact, I don't know of any who can, but he's been struggling with it for a while now. You'll have to ask him for the specifics, but being near you and not being able to help has been tearing him apart," he assured the boy. "He didn't know how to help because he didn't know exactly what was wrong. He can see trauma, but he doesn't know what happened unless he goes digging for it and he felt like it was wrong to do so without your permission first. So he asked me to help. That's why we're here."

Sniffling again, Shinsou pulled back just enough to look up at the teacher. "What-" he coughed and hugged himself around the stomach, glancing down at the muzzle that was still on the floor. "What happens now? Are- are you going to send me back to the agency? This was the only foster home close enough to UA. I'll-I'll have to drop out and I don't know if I could get into the hero course at another school. Not with my-my quirk."

Seeing the panic rising in the boy, Shouta put his hand back on the boys head and gave him a gentle smile. "Kid, I'm not sending you back

to the agency. If this has happened at all of your homes so far, then they're not fit to have you. Trust me, we'll be dealing with them after I get a chance to contact the police. If Hizashi hasn't done it already." He paused to take a breath, already knowing what he wanted to do before the boy had asked. He hadn't talked to Hizashi about it necessarily, but he was sure his husband wouldn't mind. Probably. Hopefully. "Technically when you were put into the hero course, UA was given partial custody of you in the case of an emergency. Like if you had to go to the hospital and we needed to make a decision, things like that. As your teachers, Mic and I do have partial guardianship over you."

"What does that- what does that mean?"

"It means you're coming home with us," Shouta said with a shrug, trying not to make it as big of a deal as it was. Shinsou was staring at him with big eyes and he felt something tug in his chest that he was unfamiliar with. *Was this what Mitsuki felt when she'd looked at her son for the first time? "*We have an office that we don't use. We can convert it into a bedroom for you. You'll have to either go with us early to school or take the bus, but I have an extra sleeping bag if you want to keep sleeping before class starts."

Feeling a bit awkward, he reached up to scratch the side of his face where his scar sat under his eye. He'd never had to care for children outside of school. Even back when he was in the Ikai, the clan children were always left to someone else. He didn't know the first thing about raising a kid. Still, he wasn't going to let Shinsou stay here and he wasn't going to let him go back. So the Aizawa-Yamada household it was.

"We can talk to Nezu about forcing a transfer for foster to us. He probably knows some people being the principal and all, and eventually- if you want- we can work on adoption papers," he mumbled, narrowing his eyes as he tried to imagine what that process was. "It'd probably be a lot of work but- oof-"

Shouta grunted as a body slammed into him, his instincts telling him to lock up, to fight back, but he took a moment to reassess himself before realizing it was just Shinsou. Full hugging him now, with his arms tight around Shouta's waist and his face dug into the teacher's shoulder. Shouta couldn't tell if the boy was crying again or not, but his shoulders were shaking and his breathing was heavy as the pro wrapped his arms around the boy again.

"Hey, it's okay," he muttered, dropping his chin on the boy's head and tugging him closer. "You'll be okay."

Chapter End Notes

Hope everyone liked the chapter! I know we've been hit with a lot of heavy feels recently, but don't worry, we're getting back into the fluff soon I promise!
As a side note, I wrote a little spin off called 'A Cat With a Human Heart' about Aizawa coming to this realm for the first time with Mitsuki. You should check it out, it's part two of the series. I'm thinking of writing one with Mitsuki as well when she comes back for a second time, but I haven't decided yet.

ALSO- I kind of maybe slammed my thumb in my car door today and it hurts like a *bitch*. So if updates are kind of slow this week, that's why. I'm still trying to churn them out as often as I normally do, but it just depends on how my thumb is holding up.

Love you all! Don't slam cars on your fingers and drink some water!

Chapter 24: Say Yes

Chapter Summary

> We interrupt your regularly scheduled angst for this brief commercial break.

Chapter Notes

> You've all been so amazing, and I promised some much needed fluff after all that angst. So the next few chapters will be mostly fluffy. Hope you enjoy!
>
> No trigger warnings for these two.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Living with Shouto honestly wasn't that much of a change as Izuku expected.

He had expected a shift, some struggles as they all settled in. Kaachan didn't like change, and this was a *big* change. But surprisingly, it all went rather smoothly. The first few nights were a bit awkward of course. Shouto had spent the night plenty of times before, but there was something different about it now. Something different about the fact that they were all sprawled out in the same bed instead of just on the floor on a pile of blankets. And then there was the matter of getting ready. He and Kaachan had been living together for their entire lives, sharing a bedroom for most of that time too. (There was a brief half a year where they insisted they were grown up enough to need their own rooms. It didn't last long before they both decided it was a waste because they always ended up together anyway.)

Point was that they were used to changing around each other, used to sharing a bathroom and a dresser and a desk. And while Shouto seemed to fit into their routine seamlessly, there were still times where Izuku was reminded that this was something completely new to all of them.

Like the first time Kaachan took his shirt off for bed and Shouto's face had gone so red that Izuku was worried he wouldn't have blood for the rest of his body. Or when they argued about who got which side of the bed because *someone* had to be in the middle and Shouto mentioned he'd rather not be pressed up against the wall where he couldn't escape if needed. And wasn't that thought a sobering one.

It ended up being Izuku against the wall and Shouto closest to the door with Katsuki squished between them. Which suited the fox just fine apparently because he liked knowing they were both there, they were both safe.

The biggest thing however was Shouto adjusting to having an actual family, and even just the thought of that nearly brought tears to Izuku's eyes. Sure, the boy had a sister who'd taken care of him, but Izuku could tell that he wasn't used to how the Midoriya house was run. He could tell that Shouto was hesitant to ask for anything, hesitant to answer questions if he wasn't sure what the outcome of them would be. He was almost silent as he walked through the house, and was jumpy throughout the first few nights anytime there was so much as a creak in the floor.

It broke Izuku's heart. And it pissed him off to no end that Endeavor had hurt the other boy so much.

But he was getting better, and that's all Izuku could ask for. He was determined to be there for the boy no matter what, because there was no way he was letting him go now.

Past that, their new… living arrangements were great. Embarrassing sometimes in the early morning when *needs* had to be met. But they'd been managing well.

Izuku liked the fact that he had both of his boyfriends available for kisses at all times. Liked that Shouto could be watching tv and Izuku could just saunter up and plop down in his lap for a quick make out session and the boy barely batted an eye before agreeing. He liked the fact that he could walk into the bedroom and find Kaachan sat up on their shared desk, Shouto bracketing him with his arms, and their lips locked together.

They hadn't gone further than some heated kisses and hands up shirts, but Izuku was fine with that. He wasn't sure he was quite ready for anything further and Shouto was still struggling with physical affection in the first place so they were content with just kissing.

Besides, it helped mom back off a bit on the fact that the boys were sharing a room.

Sitting through her sex talk once was one thing, he did *not* want to sit through it again. He's pretty sure he'd rather die. The bonding however was another matter entirely.

“Aren’t we already bonded?” Shouto asked late one night, when the only light in the bedroom was Izuku’s new Present Mic lamp on the desk. It reflected off his face in a pretty yellow hue that had Izuku wanting to kiss him again, but he was still trying to catch his breath from when Kaachan had *finally* released him. “You were able to communicate with Izuku, at the USJ,” he clarified.

“Don’t think it’s the same,” the blonde shrugged as he sat back, fingers running through Izuku’s hair as the youngest of them laid his head in Kaachan’s lap. “And I wasn’t really able to communicate so much as I got his attention. Like when you can just tell someone is staring at you across a room. It’s not like I can talk to him in his head like Shinsou can.”

Izuku hummed and pursed his lips slightly in thought. “But if we bond then we might be able to communicate right? Will it be like mind reading? Like what Shinsou can do?”

Kaachan rolled his eyes and glared down at the greenette. “I don’t fuckin’ know. Aizawa wasn’t exactly spitting out details. He just told me the basics and then told me to ask everyone. Plus, I have to be a hybrid which apparently is super inconvenient because it means we have no idea what’ll happen. Not to mention it’s never been done with humans before, so-“ he shrugged, something uncomfortable and worried twisting up on his face. “The fox thinks it’ll be fine, but we need to be aware of what we’re getting into. What *you’re* getting into. This isn’t just us *saying* we’re a pack,” he said sharply. “It’s like we’re tying our souls together I think.”

“But it will make it easier on you,” Shouto questioned, his eyebrows pinching together adorably. “To have us bonded to you.”

“I think so, yeah,” Kaachan answered after thinking about it for a moment. He always did that when Shouto asked a question. He stopped to think about what he wanted to say because he didn’t want the other boy to think he was just placating him or something. Shouto was hesitant asking for things, so Katsuki always wanted him to feel like he was really listening when he did. It made the butterflies in Izuku’s tummy flutter and he couldn’t help but smile. “If it works like it normally does, you guys will be able to sense me too, and the each other. It’ll be like one big feedback loop. I don’t know how deep it’ll go, but we’ll always be aware of each other, be aware if someone is in danger or hurting, shit like that.”

“Then I’d like to do it.”

The boy beneath him tensed at the words and red eyes rose quickly to meet blue and brown. “What?”

Shouto shrugged, the smallest of smiles tugging at his lips. “I would like to be bonded to you. To Izuku. To the pack.” He swallowed and glanced down at where his fingers were intertwined with Izuku’s and the greenette gave him an encouraging squeeze. “I know it will be different, and might be challenging depending on how it works, but- well you’re…”

“Family,” Izuku finished for him and Shouto gave him a grateful nod, his shoulders slumping in relief.

“Yes,” he agreed, bobbing his head. “I’ve lost too much family already and if this can help prevent that, then… well I’m saying yes. I’d like the bond.”

Izuku grinned, watching from below as Kaachan reached forward and wrapped an eager hand around the back of Shouto’s neck, pulling the shocked boy into a devastatingly hot kiss.

“Wow, I could get used to this angle.” A sharp flick to his forehead had Izuku sputtering out a laugh. “Ow!”

“Get the fuck off me you pervert.”

“Whaa- Kaachan! You didn’t even ask if I was going to say yes!”

The blonde snorted and rolled his eyes. “Yeah, as if your dumbass would say not to this.”

Which was true. Izuku would never say no to Katsuki, would never say no to Shouto.

It was always ‘yes’ for them.

“Kaachan! Let me do your makeup!”

The blonde jolted at the loud voice and he glared up from where he was sitting on the floor and leaning his head back into Mina’s lap. It hadn’t taken much convincing for her to get him to sit and work on his hair. She’d been combing her fingers through it for the past twenty minutes, working diligently on flattening his spikes and twisting them into a single intricate braid, and from what she could tell, he was enjoying the sensation. Or at least, he wasn’t complaining.

At some point his eyes had slipped closed and she thought he might be asleep, but she doubted even he could sleep with all the commotion around the living room thanks to the Smash Bro's competition the boys had started a few hours earlier.

"Why the fuck would you want to do that?" He grumbled, though she could tell it was more at the fact that she'd disturbed him than the makeup idea. Which was good because she really, *really* wanted to do his makeup.

"Because," she insisted, tying off the braid with a flourish and leaning over him to grin. "I got a new pallet and I really want to try it out and it would look *amazing* with your skin tone! Plus I need to get a better idea of what the true colours look like so I know if they'd look good on me."

Kaachan gave her deadpan look and slowly blinked. "Bitch, you're pink. No matter what you put on me, it's not going to look the same as it will on you."

Mina snorted and rolled her eyes. "Well duh. But it always looks different on actual skin than it does on the pallet so I want to get a feel of the true pigments. Besides, you'd look great in makeup! Please, please, *please*," she whined, tugging at the end of his braid and making him sneer. "Come on, Kaachan! Forget your fragile masculinity and let me make you pretty."

"Fuck you, I'm already pretty," he said, though the words held little heat as he glared up at her. "And my masculinity is fine. I'm more worried about caking a bunch of shit all over my skin. Can't go clogging up my pores since that's where my quirk comes from," he explained.

"Oh," Mina said, pleasantly surprised. Sure, she'd seen him smear his eyeliner on for his hero costume, but Kaachan had never really seemed like the kind of guy to like feminine things or makeup… maybe that was due to his brash and hostile attitude though. "That won't be a problem!" She assured him with a grin. "My acid works like that too, so I have a special oil I use afterwards in order to clear any makeup left over." Reaching over, Mina started digging through her purse before pulling out a bottle of clear liquid and handing it to the curious boy. She watched as he turned it over in his hands and started reading the label. "It's pretty expensive, but this brand has a lot of great makeup products for people with unique quirks. They even make custom foundation to match skin pigmentation and some to let

your pores breathe. I'd use that for you, but mine is in pink, so the oil's all that I have that would work on you."

She waited impatiently for him to finish reading the bottle, fidgeting slightly underneath him. The boy was so pretty already, she just couldn't wait to get her hands all over him. She'd make him *stunning*.

After a few minutes he heaved a sigh and Mina couldn't help the excitement that built in her chest at the sound. "Fucking *fine*," he grumbled, shifting and pushing himself almost reluctantly to his feet. "But if I break out because of your dumbass makeup, you're banned from pack activities for a week."

The threat was a weak one at best since Mina knew just as well as he did that he couldn't keep her away from pack activities. Still, she bobbed her head in agreement and snatched her bag from the floor to follow him to the bathroom. Shouto sent her a raise of the eyebrow as he noticed them leaving, but Mina only pressed a finger to her lips and winked.

Oh she was going to make Kaachan so pretty that dad and papa wouldn't know what hit them.

"What're you gonna do?" the blonde questioned, propping himself up on the edge of the counter and turning to watch as Mina rolled open her makeup bag and started setting everything out that she would need.

A lot of her makeup probably wouldn't work for him since, as he pointed out, she was *pink*. But most of it was pretty generic. She didn't have foundation for him, so she'd have to just go with it and hope the powder would be enough. Lucky for her, as she drew up between his legs to set to work, it was clear Kaachan's skin was *immaculate*. Probably something to do with his quirk, she figured.

"I'm gonna keep it simple," she told him with a smirk, "but I have new eyeshadow and I want to see how it looks on you. Then we'll get to eyeliner and blush and everything else. But eyes first! So close those pretty little rubies and let me get to work."

And he did.

Doing other people's makeup had always been very calming for Mina, hell, doing her own makeup was calming. She didn't have many girl friends who let her work on them, but Kami and Kirishima let her practice on them when they had time and sometimes Kami would beg

her to do his. The electric blonde was a little harder to work with because he struggled sitting still, but Mina had long ago figured out how to work around it.

Kaachan however was the picture perfect model. He sat perfectly still as she worked, seemingly content with just letting her do what she wanted. He didn't even flinch when she brought the round brush up to dust across his eyelids. Again she had the brief thought that maybe he was asleep, but she knew he wasn't.

"You're very calm today," she whispered in the quiet of the bathroom, refilling her brush with a darker shade of red before starting work on the corners of his eyes.

The blonde grunted and might have shrugged if he thought he could move. "It's easier," he said after a few moments of silence, "when the pack is all together."

Mina bobbed her head and smiled. "I always knew you were a big softie," she giggled, dodging the hand that slapped in her direction. "Hey! I'm workin' here! Sit still." She shifted to his other eye, carefully working on the top lid before instructing the boy to look up so she could work on the bottom parts, dragging a soft line of red just under his thick eyelashes. "Is it like with the bonding thing?" She asked, drawing his eyes down towards her before they stared back up at the ceiling again. "Like, when you're around us, you can sense us better right? It helps you know we're okay and stuff, that's what Aizawa said. Will it be like that for all of us when we bond? Like, being able to sense each other and it helping calm us down?"

When she pulled away to grab her eyeliner, Katsuki shrugged. "Dunno. That's how it works in regular packs, but we don't know how it'll work with humans and hybrids. At the very least it should make it easier on me," he said, shutting his eyes again as she bright the eyeliner up to his top lid. "Right now, if you guys aren't close or I don't know where you are or if you're okay it's like… like there's a million bugs under my skin, screaming at me to go track you down to figure it out. It gets even worse when one of you are hurt."

"First of all, that's gross," the pink girl grumbled as she grabbed his chin, tilting his head just enough for her to get a good angle for the hooded wing she was working on. "Second of all, that's adorable and I knew you cared."

"Shut the fuck up, you pink ass hoe," he snarked back, pulling a bright

laugh from the girl.

She liked this chilled out Katsuki. Granted, she liked regular Katsuki too, but seeing him relaxed was something different. At school, even if the others were around him, he was still on edge, still loud and twitchy. She'd put it off as his bad attitude at first, then learned it was probably more due to the fact that he was constantly getting bombarded with information and senses that he didn't want. So seeing him at home, surrounded by the pack, made him look more… comfortable. Softer in ways that she'd never expect from the boy. He was still an ass, but he was their ass and Mina loved him for it.

They were silent as she worked on the second wing and mascara, Katsuki seeming perfectly content to sit there and let her do as she wished. It was… nice.

"For the record," she said once she finished blending the contour under his- unfairly sharp- cheekbones and jaw, and dusting a soft shade of pink blush over his cheeks. "I'm all down for bonding. I know Mr. Aizawa said you needed all of our permission and stuff. So like, this is my permission. Open your mouth," he didn't hesitate before doing as she asked and she tugged out her favorite lip gloss, applying it smoothly and instructing him to rub his lips together. His pretty red eyes blinked open as he did so to watch her. "Anyway, I'm down. I know we don't *really* know what to expect, and this is like, a for life thing so we should really think about it, you know? But I have thought about it, been thinking about it since you told us last week. And," she shrugged, wiping a finger beneath his lips to catch a stray spot of gloss, "I'm down. You guys are my best friends, my family. We've been through a lot together and if we're going to be heroes… well we're probably going to go through a lot more. So, yeah, I'm down for whatever."

Kaachan watched her for a long moment, reading her face, her expressions, her eyes. Searching for any sign of hesitation or lies.

He didn't find any, so he just grunted and rolled his eyes, but Mina could see the way his shoulders slumped slightly in relief.

"Are you fuckin' done? Can I get off this counter already? I think my ass is asleep."

And Mina knew when to cut her losses and accept that the conversation was over. She'd gotten her point across and that's all she needed. Besides, she needed to focus on the fact that Katsuki looked

fucking hot as fuck when she finally stepped away and looked at him. The hooded eyeliner tapered into points in the inside corners of his eyes, making him look more like a feline or fox than he normally did in his human form, and the soft red that surrounded them added a bright pop to the gold flakes that were freckled through the red of his eyes. His lips were plumped with the gloss, shimmering slightly in the light and with a sprinkle of glitter. The braid in his hair made the look even better and Mina gave herself a pat on the back.

“Holy shit, I’m good,” she smirked, drawing a snort and a roll of the eyes from the blonde.

He didn’t disagree with her, so she counted it as another win, and he even let her snap as many pictures as she wanted with the promise that she’d post them in the group chat *after* the big reveal to the boyfriends.

Which, was probably the best thing she’d ever seen in her life because she had *never* seen two boys clam up so fucking fast.

“So-“ Mina giggled, rocking on her feet before shuffling over to the other three idiots. She started tugging them onto their feet, her bright smile never leaving her face. “We’re just gonna go,” she said, ushering Kiri, Kami, and Sero towards the doors, ignoring their complaints. “Have fun with… *that*,” she gestured towards a furiously blushing Kaachan who only glared at her in return. She paused as she passed by Izuku, leaning in just close enough to whisper in his ear.

“The lip gloss is peppermint flavored by the way.”

And then they were gone.

“Bro do you even have to ask?”

“Fucking *yes* I have to ask, you spikey toothed loser,” Katsuki spat, ducking to avoid one of Kirishima’s kicks to the head and reaching out a hand to let out an explosion on the redhead’s stomach. He hardened it in time, but the force of the attack still sent him skidding back a few feet. “This isn’t just some fucking thing you can back out of later. It’s for *life*.”

Kirishima grinned, pausing just long enough to catch a breath before jumping back into action. “Aw, bro, I think you’re supposed to get a ring before you propose. Besides, we haven’t even had our first date yet! Don’t you think getting married is a little fast?”

“Oh my god, shut the fuck up you useless whore,” the blonde spat, launching over Kirishima before aiming a shot at the back of his head. “You’d be lucky to get flowers much less a ring.”

The banter was familiar and regular for the two of them. Kirishima liked to consider Katsuki his best friend, even if the blonde was reluctant to agree with him. It’d taken a little while for the redhead to really get the boy to admit it, but if Kirishima was good at anything, it was forcing people to accept friendship. Still, he knew he’d finally cemented his place in Katsuki’s heart when the other boy stopped calling him ‘shitty hair’. Not that Spikey Toothed Loser was much of a step up, but now the insult was always carried on the back of a laugh or a fond tone. Besides, Kirishima knew that the blonde had a bad mouth and insults were just his way of showing he cared.

Speaking of…

“Hey, why did you stop calling me shitty hair?”

Katsuki skid to a stop, his face twisting up in confusion as he struggled to catch his breath. The others were all in their respective areas of the gym, since they had a free sparring period for the rest of the day, and Kirishima was glad they’d taken up the far end on their own with the unsure look that filled his friend’s eyes.

“The fuck did that come from?” he deflected, pushing his sweaty hair out of his eyes and glaring off to the side.

Kirishima shrugged, taking a moment to grab them both waters before tossing a bottle to Katsuki who caught it easily. “I don’t know, man. I was just curious. You just call me out on my teeth now, which is totes fine, I don’t care. My teeth are pretty rad, I was just wondering why you stopped on my hair.”

Something familiar and self-conscious wiggled through his stomach as he ran a hand through the red spikes, tugging at them slightly. There was a peek of black at the roots that he was currently covering with a bandana, but he’d have to get Mina to help him redye it soon. No one did it as well as she did.

Katsuki was staring at the red with narrowed eyes, as if the colour personally offended him and part of Kirishima wondered if it did for some reason. Maybe the boy just didn’t like redheads? Maybe he didn’t like *red? Oh my god who doesn’t like red? It’s the best colour ever. But Kaachan’s always wearing orange. Maybe he likes orange better. Should he dye his hair something different? But red was his staple and-*

A sharp knuckle knocked into his forehead and he blinked, pulling away and rubbing at the spot. Katsuki was looming over with a glare.

“Stop fucking thinking so loud, you idiot. It’s not whatever you’re panicking about,” he tried to reassure, but it only made Kirishima more confused. It must have shown on his face because the blonde heaved a heavy sigh and threw his arms up. “Fucking fine- you’re all nosey little shits. Sit the fuck down, I’m not having this conversation while sparring. We’ll take a break, I’ll tell you what you want to know, and then I’m going to kick your ass and I’m not going to go easy on you.”

His curiosity getting the better of him, Kirishima nodded and dropped himself onto the ground, crossing his legs and leaning up against the wall. Katsuki followed suit, propping his arms up on his knees and dangling the water bottle from his fingertips as he struggled to think of where to begin.

“You all know I can sense trauma or whatever,” he started slowly, lips twisting up in disgust, like he was mad at himself for feeling so weird about this. Kirishima nodded to show he was listening and that he did in fact know that. After the whole thing with Shinsou, he’d told the entire pack before promptly telling them that he wouldn’t look at their ’fog’ without permission so they ‘didn’t need to fucking worry about it’. Kirishima hadn’t been worried in the first place. He didn’t expect he had any fog so it didn’t really matter to him. “Well I can sense yours.”

The redhead straightened, eyes widening and a frown tugging at his lips. “Mine? But I don’t have trauma.”

“You fuckin’ do,” Katsuki argued, waving towards Kirishima’s hair. “It’s all over your hair. It’s not as dark as Shinsou’s or Shouto’s, which probably means it was either a long time ago or not as traumatic, but you’ve still got it.”

His hair?

Oh.

And yeah, he supposed that made sense. He didn’t really consider what happened *traumatizing* really, not when he looked back at it. But… yeah it still did fuck him up for a while. If it hadn’t been for Crimson Riot’s tape, he probably wouldn’t even be there right now, sitting next to his half demon best friend, training at the most prestigious hero school in the country, and hanging out with the best

friends a guy could ask for.

“I didn’t realize it was that big of a deal,” Kirishima said carefully, trying to laugh it off but it sounded forced even to his own ears. He rubbed a hand through his hair again in a nervous habit and looked away from Katsuki’s knowing gaze. “It was a like, a year ago or something. Mina and I went to the same middle school. We weren’t friends or anything, but we knew each other in passing I guess. Anyway, I wasn’t anything special- stick thin, plain black hair, useless quirk. But I wanted to be a hero, you know? Always have. So I tried to stick up for kids who were being bullied, tried to be a hero when I could, but it never ended up going well.” Kirishima shrugged, releasing a more real sounding snort. “I got my ass kicked more times than I could count because I couldn’t control my quirk for shit back then, you know?”

Katsuki gave him a scrutinizing look, like he was trying to imagine a different version of Kirishima than the one sitting next to him. “Can’t picture you with black hair,” he mumbled carefully.

Kirishima laughed and shrugged. “Good, because it was awful. Anyway- there was one day when I was walking home from school and this girl down the street was being attacked by this massive guy. And I literally mean massive. He was almost as tall as the building. Guy was a giant.” The memory brought up a nervous tingling in his gut and Kirishima found himself twisting the cap on his water bottle on and off and on and off. He didn’t like thinking about that day, but he *had* asked and he felt like the blonde deserved an answer. “I wanted to go over there and help her. I don’t remember what her quirk was, but all I kept thinking was that she needed help. I *wanted* to help. But shit, I was terrified. I couldn’t move, you know? My brain just kept telling me that I couldn’t do anything. My quirk wasn’t strong enough, I could just make it worse, and the guy could have easily killed me. Then Mina stepped in.”

He paused to glance across the room at the girl in question, a soft smile coming to his lips as he watched her and Izuku work on her new support gloves.

“She stood up to the giant without an ounce of fear in her face and the guy just... walked away. She didn’t even have to fight him, she just stood her ground and he left.” His shoulders slumped and he glanced back down at his water bottle. “I remember hating myself after that, because Mina *was* scared. She was terrified, but she stepped up anyway because she wanted to be a hero. She *was* a hero. And I just

stood there."

"That's dumb, you were just a kid," Katsuki argued, red eyes narrowed in anger, though he wasn't sure why.

Kirishima shrugged. "Yeah but so was Mina. Anyway, point is I went home that day and threw away my UA application. I figured I couldn't do it if I was so scared all the time. And besides, how was I supposed to even get in with how weak my quirk was, right? But I threw some things and it activated my Crimson Riot disc and- well," he blushed and avoided the raised eyebrow he got in return. "That uh- isn't the point. I was just reminded that Crimson Riot was my favorite hero, you know? And his quirk is so much like mine. And in that interview he was talking about how it was manly to be scared, but what was even more manly was fighting anyway."

"What does that have to do with your fucking hair?" Katsuki groused, face twisting up in confusion and Kirishima couldn't help the laugh that burst from him.

"Right! Sorry- nothing really. I just wanted to start over. I didn't want to be that kid that stood there and did nothing anymore. I didn't want to be on the sidelines anymore," the redhead shrugged, tugging his bandana up to show off the black roots. "So I dyed my hair red, to remind myself that I was different now. That I was going to be the best I could be. I worked really hard over the summer to get my quirk stronger and then- well the rest is history," he chuckled, spreading out his hands towards the rest of the gym. "I guess… my hair still makes me really insecure sometimes and reminds me of a time in my life that I didn't love myself. And loving yourself is super manly! So, that's probably why you see fog around it, why it isn't too dark. I guess. Probably," he shrugged.

Katsuki stared at him for a long time before turning to stare at the gym. After a good ten minute break in silence, the blonde grunted and shoved himself back onto his feet, holding his hand out for Kirishima to take. Once he was tugged to his feet, the blonde rolled his shoulders and took up a fighting position.

It wasn't until they were leaving the gym later that day that he finally said anything else. Wasn't until they were parting ways at the bus station, Katsuki trailing behind Izuku and Shouto and Kirishima with his arm linked with Mina's, that the blonde nudged his shoulder.

"Red looks better on you anyway."

Chapter End Notes

Yay! So this chapter and the next are going to all focus on the pack individually. Someone mentioned in a comment that they were glad I wasn't *just* focusing on our trio after the Kirishima/Bakugou bonding moment so I wanted to give everyone else some screen time too. That being said, this chapter is Kirishima, Mina, and the boys. Next chapter is going to focus on Kami, Sero, Hatsume and Shinsou. Probably. We'll see how it ends up structured. This may be a three part fluffer instead of a two part. Not sure yet.

Anyway, my thumb is doing much better today, so thank you for all the well wishes. It's ugly looking, but doesn't hurt too bad so I'm still going to crank out my chapters.

Drink water and eat some yummy snacks! Love you all!

Chapter 25: Roller Skates

Chapter Summary

Hatsume gets her moment and Kaminari gets an Icee.

Chapter Notes

Next two in the fluffy bonding moments! This chapter was actually a lot of fun and I'm glad you guys are enjoying these little fluffy side pieces. They're a little shorter than my usual, but it's just because they're in between scenes.

No trigger warnings here :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Will you please sit still. If I don’t fit these to you well enough, then they’ll fall off in the middle of battle,” Hatsume groused, grabbing at Katsuki’s chin and shoving it in the direction she needed it to be before getting back to work at bending the sleek metal around his ear. “You’re already ruining my fun by not letting me add anything special to them, the least you could do is be a good little puppet and do as I tell you.”

The blonde growled, but it didn’t deter her or scare her. Hatsume knew that he was nothing more than an overgrown house cat- to the pack at least. She had no doubt the boy could tear a bitch apart in a second if needed. (Actually, she *knew* he could because she’d seen it already with the other yokai at the sports festival.)

“You’ve been trying to get them fitted for an *hour*,” Katsuki grumbled, crossing his arms over his chest. “It can’t honestly be taking this long.”

Sighing, the pink haired girl took a step back and held the metal out to him expectantly. “Okay, go on then. Hold it here,” she said, taking his hand and slipping the metal over his finger with a raised eyebrow. “Now tell me what’s wrong with it.”

The metal itself was shaped in a similar way to the black and orange spikes the boy usually had on the sides of his head, the smaller ones that came off his masks, not the bigger ones in the back. The previous spikes were thin, made out of only stabilized material and fabric, but these ones were metal. Sleek and thin, while still being thick enough to hold the necessary equipment within them before tapering off into

sharpened points. The base of the spikes curled and attached to a rounded earpiece that would ideally fit around and into the boy's ear. Once she was done with them, they would be fully functioning hearing aids, as well as sound blockers in the hopes of blocking any extra damage he might accrue over time, or at the very least, slow it down.

Katsuki glared at her, but he did as she asked, holding where she said, only to fumble immediately when it went spinning off his finger and hurtling towards the ground. He just barely managed to snatch it out of the air before she took it back.

"It's too top heavy," the blonde commented with narrowed eyes.

"Exactly! Now, do you know *why* it's so top heavy?" She didn't give him time to answer, instead fitting him with a manic grin before grabbing his chin and turning his head again to get back to work. "I'll tell you. It's because of all the equipment I'm putting into the spikes."

"It doesn't *need* extra shit," Katsuki tried to argue, rolling his eyes. "All I asked was for you to make me hearing aids that blended into my costume. I don't *need* fancy ones."

The support student fought back another sigh before she backed up, turning to pull her prototype off the table, dropping the metal casing in its place. "Fine, how about a demonstration? Tilt your head like this so it doesn't fall off," she instructed, tilting his head for him and sliding the metal contraption into his ear and settling it around the shell. "Now close your eyes."

Red eyes narrowed at her in suspicion. "Why?"

"Because I told you to," she teased, waiting until he complied before activating her hover boots so he wouldn't hear her walking. "What do you hear?"

There was a moment of silence as he took in her question. "The usual. Students in the next room, your fucking boots whirring annoyingly, your stupid voice."

Hatsume giggled and rolled her eyes. "Always a flatterer. Good, so that's what your normal hearing sounds like. Now what do you hear?" She slipped behind him silently before reaching a hand out to hover just above his ear. Almost instantly the blonde recoiled, eyes shooting open to scan the room and turning to face her.

“The fuck was that?”

Grinning wide, the girl raised her hand again, this time with Katsuki watching her and hovered it about a foot away from his ear and slightly behind. He jolted again. “This, is my newest baby! Made especially for you and it was *going* to be a surprise but you had to ruin it by being a little brat,” she snorted, taking the contraption away from him before laying it flat in her hand to show him. She pointed towards the little glowing dots at the ends of each spike. “See these? They’re motion detectors. Basically the idea is that this part,” she gestured towards the base hearing aid, “will serve as your regular aids. However, they’ll be connected to each tip here and be fed information based on your surroundings. So if someone is sneaking up on you and you can’t hear them-“

“Then it beeps at me like it did when you got too close,” Katsuki finished for her, something akin to awe in his voice that had Hatsume’s chest swelling with pride and excitement. “That’s… pretty fuckin’ genius actually.”

“Exactly! And thank you,” he snorted at her but she ignored him. “Ideally, you’ll be able to turn that feature on and off. You don’t want them beeping in your ear anytime some random passerby stops you for an autograph or something, but I’m still trying to work out the kinks considering it’s a lot of hardware going into such a small piece.”

Blonde spikes bobbed as Katsuki nodded. “Hence it being top heavy.”

She snapped her fingers at him and smiled. “Got it in one, baby. I’m hoping to have a prototype ready for you before final exams, but Izu’s been busy with some project for Shinsou and your new gauntlets, and I’m working on these, Iida’s arm engines, and Ochako’s wrist bracers, so we’re a little swamped. I’m also trying to work comms into them so you can talk to other heroes, but like I said- that’s a lot of hardware for such a small case. I’ll figure it out though!”

“I’m sure you will,” Katsuki said in an uncharacteristically soft tone. Hatsume tilted her head in consideration but he just brushed it off and turned his head for her, letting her get back to work without complaining. When she’d finally bent the metal into a spot where it wouldn’t shift, she left it to cool and propped herself up on the table across from Katsuki. “So- is this our bonding moment?”

The other boy’s brow crinkled and his lips twisted into a sneer for a long moment before answering. “Our fucking what?”

“You know! Our bonding moment! You got your moment with Mina and Kiri, asking for permission to get bonded. Is this my turn? You don’t usually come hang out with me when the rest of the pack isn’t here,” she shrugged.

It didn’t hurt her feelings or anything. Her and Katsuki had an understanding. He could only handle so much ‘enthusiasm’ a day, and Hatsume didn’t really like to be away from her tinkering for too long either. So they just didn’t tend to hang out as often as some of the other pack members. It worked for them, she wasn’t complaining. But it still made her curious.

He sighed and leaned back in his chair, keeping his head tilted as needed for the metal to set. “That’s because anytime I fuckin’ show up, you want to experiment on me. Like now,” he accused, waving a hand at the prototype on the table. He didn’t mention the fact that the adjustments she’d made to the hearing aids were *great* and *helpful as fuck*. “I was actually planning on saving you for last,” he said quietly, glaring off to the wall over her shoulder. “But if you wanna have it now, then we can have it now.”

“Save me for last? Why?” She wondered.

Katsuki shrugged. “You’re a part of the pack,” he answered nonchalantly, “but you’ve always been Izuku’s part. I’m not complainin’,” he rushed to say, eyes finding hers quickly to show her that it was the truth. “You’re as much of this pack as everyone else, it’s just- well…”

“I’m closer to Izuku than I am to you,” she finished for him, giving the hesitant boy a smile. “I get that. You thought I’d say no.”

It wasn’t a question, but Hatsume knew it was the truth. Her and Katsuki weren’t very close, but it was obvious to her that he still cared about her. Even after the USJ, when their friendship was still so new, he checked in on her multiple times throughout the day, texting her for updates once she’d left the hospital.

Katsuki did that a lot, check in on them. Take care of them. They joked about him being the pack mom, but it really couldn’t be any closer to the truth. General protectiveness aside, more often than not Katsuki was the one checking on them if they were stressed or upset. He was making sure they were drinking water after training and taking breaks during building (in Izuku and Hatsume’s case). If the two support students were in the garage or lab for any longer than

three hours at a time, the blonde would come storming in and demand they take a break for at *least* thirty minutes. Not to mention he always seemed obsessed with feeding everyone. Something about them using all their energy during training or something.

Hatsume wasn't complaining, not by a long shot, but she couldn't understand why he would ever think she'd say no to the bonding. Sure, her relationship with Izuku was more established than her relationship with the rest of the pack, but that's just because she spent so much time with the green-haired boy. She still felt like a part of the pack, still felt like she belonged. She wouldn't question that.

"I don't want you to think you're being left out," Katsuki said quietly, still not looking at her. "If you said no- then it wouldn't matter if everyone else said yes because it- well it wouldn't matter. Pack isn't complete without you there too."

There was a hint of a shy, discomfort in his voice and Hatsume wanted to take pity on the boy. He wasn't used to having to talk about his feelings. He wasn't used to being vulnerable in front of others, especially the pack. So she found herself kind of grateful that he was willing to do so in front of her.

"Oh lighten up you grump," she laughed, kicking his knee with her heavy boots and barely dodging his kick back. "I don't feel left out, and if I ever did, you'd be the first to know," she promised. "And besides, no way I'm letting you all have fun without me. I was in the moment Aizawa brought it up. Besides, Izuku already warned me about you wanting to talk to everyone. That's why I mentioned it today. Figured it was better than cornering you later," she teased him and he rolled his eyes. "Plus, now you've got me out of the way!"

"Yeah well… thanks… or whatever," he grumbled.

"Yeah well, you're welcome, *or whatever,"* she mocked.

Katsuki kicked her and Hatsume cackled.

Sparky Sparky Boom Man 00:05

Hey dunce-face, open the window.

Pika-Pika 00:06

Bro it's like, midnight.

Sparky Sparky Boom Man 00:06

Are you awake?

Pika-Pika 00:07

This is a trick question. This is a trap. I know it.

Are you here to kill me?

Sparky Sparky Boom Man 00:07

Open the fucking window or I'm breaking it.

Kaminari jumped into action immediately, launching himself off his beanbag chair and dropping his switch in his haste to get to the window. Kaachan was *probably* joking, but one could never be sure with the blonde and Kami *really* didn't want to explain to his mom why his classmate had broken into his bedroom in the middle of the night.

After a few seconds of struggling, the electric blonde pushed the window open and glanced out to see Katsuki leaned up against the wall beside it.

"What the heck, Kaachan? I could have been asleep!" He whisper-yelled, glaring at the other boy. "What are you even doing here? Did you sneak out? Oh my god you snuck out!" Kaminari gasped, dragging a hand through his hair. "Do you *know* how scary Momma Inko is? She's going to kill you! Oh my god she's going to kill me!"

With a groan, Kaachan shoved Kaminari's face back with a rough hand and bared his teeth at him. "Will you *shut up*? You're being too loud!"

"What are you doing here?"

Rolling his eyes, the taller boy held up a skateboard and jabbed his head in the direction of the street. “Grab your skates. We’re going to the gas station.” Kami opened his mouth to argue but Katsuki covered it before he could, glaring at him. “Grab. Your. Skates. And. Let’s. Go.”

It was an order if he ever heard one and the younger boy sighed. “Fine! But if we get caught, then you’re paying my allowance for however long I’m grounded.”

It didn’t take him long to get ready, slipping on a bright yellow hoodie that was way too big on him, some ripped jeans, and his pastel yellow roller skates. He waited until he was out of the window to slip them on, lacing the purple laces with quick and precise movements. Beside him, Katsuki was surprisingly patient as he waited.

“Is there a reason we’re going to the gas station at midnight on a school night?” He managed to ask once they’d hit the road, Kaachan on his board beside him and Kami skating backwards to stare at the boy. “Seriously, what if I’d been asleep, bro? Beauty like this doesn’t come easily!”

The Kitsune snorted and turned a- rather rude- look towards him, raising an eyebrow. “You’ve got too much energy to be asleep before three a.m. How you even survive with so little sleep, I have no idea. If I didn’t know better I’d say you and Shinsou were having a competition to see which one of you could die from sleep deprivation first.”

Kami laughed and did a quick little dance on his skates, mostly just out of habit, but part of him also wanted to show off a bit. “Well, my bet’s on the monkey,” he grinned. “He runs off coffee and I run off pure electricity baby. Coffee kills first.”

They fell into a surprisingly comfortable silence after that, Katsuki weaving through the street on a board that looked extremely well loved yet taken care of, and Kaminari twisting and turning in fancy dance moves to music he couldn’t hear. It was… kind of calming actually. Kami was usually one for a lot of talking and filling the silence. He had too much energy and his thoughts worked too fast, so lulls in conversation were usually grating on his nerves. With Kaachan though there was no expectation for conversation, and whenever the two of them hung out, the older blonde made sure they were doing *something* that Kaminari could focus on instead of talking. Not that Kami minded talking of course, but sometimes he liked just hanging out and being with people.

Besides, Kaachan didn't expect anything from him, and honestly he probably wouldn't mind if Kami *did* decide to chatter his ear off in the middle of the night on their way to the gas station. Which he still wasn't sure why they were doing that.

Lucky for him, the other boy didn't seem bothered with the fact that Kaminari couldn't skate in a straight line, instead moving in complicated steps and expert circles. It'd been a while since he'd gone skating, but it was something he'd always loved to do and with how busy they'd been with school, he hadn't had much time to do it.

"You skate with Shinsou?" Kaachan asked as he watched little sparks of lightning trail after them and Kaminari had to stop himself from stumbling right into a lamp post.

"W-what? Shinsou? Why- um-" he coughed, clearing his throat and trying to give his award-winning 'I have no idea what you're talking about' smile. "Why would you ask that?"

Katsuki didn't buy it, if the look on his face was anything to go by. "I'm not blind, dumbass. You guys have been making bedroom eyes at each other for fucking weeks. I'm getting sick of it."

Kami laughed, covering his mouth quickly and glancing around in the darkness to make sure he hadn't woken anyone up. With a quick *swish* of his feet, he was backwards again so he could face the other blonde. He jabbed a finger at him and pouted. "First of all, Shinsou doesn't make bedroom anything at anyone. Especially me. Second of all, you're one to talk. We knew you guys were dating like weeks before you ever told us. Plus you guys can barely keep your hands off each other."

Ignoring the jab at himself, Kaachan narrowed his eyes at Kami. "You're serious?"

"Yeah man- we caught you guys making out like-"

"No, Dunce-face," the blonde interrupted, poking Kami in the forehead and making him wobble on his skates. "I meant about Shinsou. I knew you were an idiot, but I didn't realize it was this bad. The kid has it bad for you."

Which… couldn't be true, could it? Kaminari couldn't remember a single time when the other yokai had even so much as blinked at Kami differently than anyone else. Sure, he'd been all worried about him after the USJ, but he was worried about everyone. And yeah, he'd

given Kaminari the *best* pep talk before the sports festival, but he'd probably given everyone one of those, right? And sure, he had been clinging to Kami's shirt after the festival like his life depended on it, but he was pretty sure the other boy's life *did* depend on it, so that didn't count. But okay, if he really dug deep into it, he could remember times where Shinsou would sit closer to Kami even though there was *plenty* of room on the bench in the café. Or he'd pull Kami into his lap during movie nights so he didn't have to sit on the floor. But Kiri did that to Mina too and- well that was a bad example because they totally had a thing for each other so-

Oh my god.

"Oh my god," he breathed, skidding to a hault and staring off into the darkness with wide, yellow eyes. "*Oh my GOD*."

"And there it is," Katsuki sighed beside him, but if Kami paid attention (which he didn't), he could hear the fondness in the words.

Yellow eyes met red and Kami reached out to grab at Katsuki's still shoulders, barely registering the fact that he'd kicked his board up and was holding it now so he didn't get too far ahead. "Shinsou likes me," he breathed, the words sounding foreign on his tongue and his fingers clenched around Katsuki's camo hoodie. "Shinsou- he likes me. Like, he *like like's* me. Me!"

"Yeah, dumbass, he does," Katsuki smiled, even as he rolled his eyes. "You're literally the only person he lets touch him. Even I don't touch him."

"I just thought he was too shy to tell me to stop!" Kaminari blabbered, his voice cracking at the end and his cheeks burning red. "I didn't think- holy shit- holy shit what am I going to do?! Why did you tell me this?" He demanded, shaking the blonde roughly before digging his hands into his own hair. "You shouldn't have told me this! How am I going to go to school tomorrow knowing that Shinsou likes me? I'm going to be a blubbering mess. I won't even be able to look at him. Do you know how hard it is not to look at him," he demanded, not expecting an answer. "He's so *pretty*," he whined.

A sharp tug at his lightning bolt made him freeze and he blinked up at Katsuki, only to see an annoyed but fond expression on his face. "Will you shut the fuck up already? Jesus, you're as hopeless as Izuku." The blonde didn't wait before dropping his board again and hopping onto it, expecting Kaminari to follow. Which he *did*, thank you very much,

even if his legs were a little shaky and he wasn't nearly *there* enough to focus on cool moves. "And what do you mean, what do you do about it? You fucking walk up to him, grab his face- because he'll let you- and smack your lips right on his. No hesitation. That's pretty much what I did and look how I turned out."

"*What*?! I can't just- but what if he-"

"What? Says no?" Katsuki snorts at the idea, as if it had never even occurred to him before. "The idiot is head over heels for you. He'd probably cry if you kissed him."

"But I'm-" Something churned in Kami's stomach and he swallowed, glancing down at the yellow of his skates and shoving his hands in his pockets. "I'm so *much*, you know? And he's always so… calm and cool and collected. And he's got that whole bad boy vibe to him and I'm like- definition Himbo." He honestly couldn't even comprehend how the other boy could like him at all. He was loud, annoying, never stopped talking. But then again, Shinsou had never complained about those things. In fact, just the other day they'd sat in the library for three hours after school with Kaminari just *talking* about some new book he was reading and Shinsou just… listening. "What if- what if I kiss him and he realizes that I'm not worth the headache or something?"

Katsuki was silent beside him for a while as they rolled up to the 24-hour gas station and strode inside. No one spared them a second glance as they loaded up on snacks and midnight Icee's- Kami with a mix of cherry, lime, and coka-cola and Katsuki with a simple cherry.

They made their way towards the beach and propped themselves on one of the docks, legs dangling over the edge and hanging just above the water.

It was… nice. Weird, definitely. But nice.

"You're not too much," Katsuki finally said after finishing off one of his candy bars and shoving the wrapper in his pocket. He took a drink and blatantly ignored Kaminari turning to look at him. "You're loud and annoying sometimes, yeah, but it's… it's just who you are. You shouldn't be ashamed of that or whatever," the other blonde shrugged. "I'm loud as fuck and I yell more often than I talk. You don't see me complaining."

Kaminari sighed and kicked his foot out, watching the wheels of his skate spin slightly with the motion. "Yeah, but you already have

boyfriends."

Katsuki snorted, rolling his eyes over to Kami with a deadpan look. "I wasn't *born* with boyfriends, you dunce. They still had to learn to like me. Besides, one of them is just as quiet and repressed as Shinsou, so I'd like to think I have some experience in the department."

"Well… how did you get Shouto to like you?"

"I didn't," the other boy answered, following it up with a loud slurp of his Icee. "I was just me. He just liked me on his own. And you don't have to worry about it because Shinsou *already likes you*. And if he breaks your heart, well- then I'll kill him. Easy as that."

Kami couldn't really tell if the threat was a joke or not, but it made his heart flutter none the less and his face split into a grin that reached to his ears. He leaned his shoulder against Katsuki's and giggled when he was shoved away. "Aw, Kaachan, you do care!" The yokai *tsked* loudly but didn't argue the point, going back to his snacks instead and staring out into the dark waters.

He looked nice like this, calm and content. Katsuki was right, he *did* yell a lot. Seeing this softer side of him wasn't something Kaminari was used to, wasn't something *any* of them were used to- with the exception of Dad and Papa maybe. And he couldn't help but notice that they'd been seeing it a lot more recently after the talk of the bond and stuff with Mr. Aizawa. Sure, it wasn't *all* the time. And usually his caring came with vague threats of killing them if they didn't get enough sleep, or violently shoving food in their faces until they ate. But it was still caring.

Kaminari counted it.

"Hey, Kaachan?" The blonde hummed in question but didn't turn to face him. "Not that this little date wasn't like, literally the best. But like- was there an actual reason you dragged me out here in the middle of the night? I assume it wasn't to talk about my love life."

Katsuki tensed beside him for a moment before relaxing again, his fingers *clacking* against the wood boards of the dock as he tried to gather his thoughts. "Couldn't sleep," he said after a while, eyes still trained on the horizon. "Been thinking about the bonding and everything. Still needed to ask if you were up for it I guess."

Kaminari frowned, tilting his head to the side in confusion. "Was that- not already a given? Bro, I was in the first time Mina asked if we were

a pack.”

“You-“ Katsuki jolted at the words, turning narrowed and confused eyes towards him only to sneer at the smile he got in return. “It’s fuckin’ different, dumb ass. Those were just words. This is like, a lifetime commitment or some shit.”

Kami bobbed his head excitedly and shrugged. “Brochaan, you seriously don’t need to convince me. I said I was in. You guys are my best friends! Plus, being a part of a demon pack sounds like the dopest thing in the world. If marrying seven or eight people spiritually is how I that, then so be it!”

He was almost shoved off the dock at that, his loud laugh carried off by the ocean’s breeze as Katsuki grumbled about it not being a *marriage*.

But Kami wouldn’t care if it was or wasn’t. Because these people- this *pack*- was his everything and he wasn’t going to give it up for the world.

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter will be Sero and Shinsou! Thanks for all the lovely comments as usual. You guys are my main source of Serotonin outside of the show itself.

This chapter was inspired by a lo-fi playlist on youtube called 'Roller Skating to the Gas Station with Denki Kaminari'. (Or something like that, I can't remember if that's exactly what it is.) I just really like the idea of chilled out Kami doing those cool skating dances you see all over TikTok.

On a side note, I have a question for everyone. I know I've been pretty inconsistent on the names, what with calling some of them nicknames and first names and last names. Would it confuse people if I slipped into just using nicknames and first names after the bonding ceremony? Because I feel like they're all close enough now that they wouldn't be calling each other by their family names. But I don't want it to feel weird halfway through the story, you know? Would love some input!

Take a deep breath and remember to drink some water!

Chapter 26: An Invitation

Chapter Summary

Katsuki gets a final answer and Shouta is summoned.

Chapter Notes

This chapter was a mess to write and I low-key hate it, but I was just really excited about the last scene so I kind of rushed. Sorry if it feels weird or rushed compared to the rest of the pack's answers, but I think it fits for these two.

No trigger warnings here! Enjoy!

NOTE: I DO NOT SPEAK SPANISH. The spanish in this chapter was 100% provided by google translate, so I apologize to anyone that like, is going to make fun of me for how terrible it is.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“You are not seriously about to do this right now.”

Shinsou groaned, rubbing his hands over his tired eyes and glaring at the boy in the doorway. Shinsou knew that all the students in class had Mr. Aizawa’s address in case of emergencies, but he’d never expected for any of them to show up there to see *him*. Granted, Shinsou was living with the two teachers now, but still. He’d never gotten visitors before and now he’d had two in one week. First with Izuku who came by to work on Shinsou’s support mask, and now with Katsuki, who stood there fully awake despite it being way too early in the morning.

The blonde raised an eyebrow and held out one of the cups in his hand. A peace offering of sorts, and Shinsou could tell from there it was coffee.

He glared at it for a few moments as he debated whether or not he could just… shut the door in Katsuki’s face. But the scent of freshly brewed- and *expensive* judging by the label- bean juice was too good an opportunity to pass up. So he sighed and took the cup, taking a side step to let the blonde into the house.

“Come on, we’ll go to my room. Aizawa is still asleep, he only got home like, an hour ago or something,” Shinsou grumbled as he led the

Kitsune through the house and towards one of the back rooms. “Mic should be getting home soon from the radio show. So we need to be quiet if you’re going to be here,” he warned.

Katsuki snorted, but his voice was soft as he spoke, careful of his usually loud tone. “Does anyone in this fucking family have normal sleep schedules?”

“Ha, yeah right,” Shinsou responded, taking a hungry, *delicious* sip of his coffee. (And damn… if it meant Katsuki bringing him this stuff more often, he could be okay with a few early morning wake up calls.) “Sorry not all of us can be early birds at-“ he paused to look down at his phone and moaned in despair. “Fucking seven a.m. Holy shit, you bitch. What the hell is so important that it couldn’t wait until a decent hour of the day?”

“You wake up at seven every day.”

“On *school days*, it’s fucking Sunday, Katsuki,” Shinsou argued, pushing open the door of his bedroom and letting it fall closed behind the blonde.

It was a nice sized room, bigger than most of the ones he’d ever had in the foster homes and he had it all to himself. Shinsou was grateful. While the last house hadn’t make him room with anyone, a lot of the other homes had and he… was grateful for the solitude now.

It was still pretty sparse, but his two teachers had gotten him the necessities at least: bed, dresser, desk, bookshelf, nightstand, etc. His capture scarf was hung up on the back of the door and there was an Eraserhead poster hidden behind it that Katsuki raised an eyebrow at, causing Shinsou to hide his blush behind his coffee.

“Shut the fuck up, Mic thought it’d be funny and-“ he shrugged, glancing away. “I couldn’t just get rid of it. That’d be rude.”

There were few other decorations, mostly little things that Shinsou had been able to bring with him: some of his favorite books, a stuffed Miruko doll that looked like it’d been through the ringer, some drawings on the corkboard above the desk, polaroid’s of the pack pinned around them that Kami had given him after their last pack night. It wasn’t much, but it felt more like home than any other place had before, and it made the satori equal parts happy and on edge.

This wasn’t something he wanted to lose, but he couldn’t help but hope it was permanent.

“Mic said I can get more decorations and stuff once the adoption papers go through,” he muttered in the quiet air, the disposable cup warm in his hands. Katsuki grunted but didn’t say much else. Instead they sat in comfortable silence for a while, Shinsou leaning up against the edge of his bed and Katsuki sprawled out on the floor with his eyes closed. Like some sort of blonde haired, demonic snow angel or something.

“Seriously,” Shinsou started after he finished his coffee. He reached out a socked foot and nudged the blonde in his ribs with his toes. “As much as I love that you encourage my coffee addiction, why the hell are you here so early on a Sunday. I know it’s not to sleep on my floor. Fess up.”

Katsuki shrugged, trying to appear nonchalant but Shinsou could see the hesitation in him, see the struggle on his face as he tried to gather his thoughts. “It’s about the bonding.”

Shinsou hummed and bobbed his head. “What about it? Did someone say no?”

He wasn’t sure why, but the idea than any of the pack would deny the ceremony sent something angry and protective stabbing through his chest. He couldn’t imagine which of the pack wouldn’t agree, they all seemed pretty close, but Aizawa had warned them that it was a lifetime commitment… maybe one of them just didn’t think it was worth it. They were only in high school-

“Nah, so far everyone’s said yes,” Katsuki shrugged, folding his arms behind his head. “I’ve only got you and Sero left now.”

Ah, that made more sense. Their dark-haired friend was just as chaotic as the others sometimes, but was probably still one of the more chill and reserved members of the family. “You think Sero’s going to say no? He seemed pretty enthusiastic about it the other day. And I heard him talking to Kaminari about it yesterday. I think he’s pretty much in.”

“God fuck, why do you have to make this so hard,” Katsuki groaned as he pushed himself up into a seated position and turned a glare at Shinsou. “I’m here for *you*, dumbass. I need permission from everyone, and I only have you and Sero left. Why the hell would I have woken you up at 7 am on a Sunday if I was here to talk about tape-face?”

Shinsou blinked at that and frowned. “Me? You do know that it’s literally in my blood to serve your kind right?”

Katsuki didn't like that if the sharp sneer twisting on his face was anything to go by. "Don't fucking say it like that, it sounds creepy," he spat, folding his arms over his knees. "Besides, I don't give two flying shits if you're like supposed to or not. You still get a choice, just like everyone else. If you don't wanna be bonded to us, then you won't be. Simple as that," he growled, and there was a moment where Shinsou could see the faint black-orange outline of a fox shimmering in the air around the boy before it vanished again. It wasn't like the tails appearing. This was more... spiritual. Like Shinsou was seeing the yokai spirit that surrounded Katsuki, similar to how he saw the others at the USJ. He saw it a lot when the boy got emotional or passionate about something. He had more control of releasing his tails when he wasn't at school or home, but his spirit couldn't be hidden.

Aizawa said it was something only Shinsou could do, since he couldn't see the spirits when someone was in their human form.

"Katsuki," Shinsou sighed, rubbing tiredly at his eyes and dropping the empty coffee cup into a trashcan under his nightstand. "I'm practically bonded to you already. It's not like a Satori will just serve any Kitsune that shows up. It's not like I'd just change sides if your mom showed up or something. That's not how it works," at least… he didn't *think* that's how it worked. "But if you need to hear it then fine. I formally give you my permission to bond with me, because I'm awesome and benevolent and you should feel honored to even have me consider being in your pack," he drawled, waving his hand around in the air dramatically.

He didn't manage to dodge the leg that kicked him in the shin and he laughed quietly, Katsuki snorting and rolling his eyes across from him. "You're such a bitch."

He didn't say thank you, but Shinsou didn't need thanks. He knew where he belonged- for once in his life, he *knew*. And this was it. He belonged here, with this pack, with this *family*. And he wasn't going to give it up now that he had it.

"Well… you've woken me up and supplied me with bean juice which means I'm not going back to sleep. Wanna help me finish my homework or something?"

"Sero, quién está en la puerta?"

The dark haired boy sighed and opened the door wider to let Katsuki in. The blonde looked strangely out of place in the new environment,

but Sero didn't blame him. The only other person who'd been to his house was Kirishima. (And Mina for only like a second when she came to pick him up one day.) It wasn't that his home was bad or anything, Sero just lived the furthest from everyone else in the pack, so he usually made the trip to them just to make it easier.

Honestly he'd been a little shocked when the other boy asked to come over, but he was never one to deny company, so he'd eagerly agreed.

"Es mi amigo de la escuela, Katsuki," he called back, his voice carrying through the hallway with ease. He turned to Katsuki and gestured towards the stairs. "Come on, my room is upstairs. Mom is making dinner, she'll let us know when it's done."

Which is how Sero found himself seated next to the blonde on matching beanbag chairs, yelling at each other over their sixty-fifth round of Smash. It was always like this when they got together to hang out- playing video games that is. Though normally they were surrounded by everyone else in one massive game of battle royal.

"Am I the last one?" Sero asked an hour into their game, not looking away from the screen when Katsuki hummed in question. "For the bonding," he clarified. "Everyone's said you've talked to them already, so I figured it was me or Shinsou." Katsuki was quiet for a while, though it was clear he wasn't completely focused on the game when he got punted off one of the levels and didn't even try to save himself. It was then that Sero paused the game and turned towards him on his beanbag, eyebrow raised. "Bro, you can't really be nervous that I'll say no, right?"

The blonde shook his head and frowned. "No, I figured you'd say yes."

Sero bobbed his head, but he was still confused. "Okay, then why the scrunchy face?"

There was another long moment before Katsuki put his controller down and leaned back into his seat, crossing his arms protectively over his chest. He didn't look at Sero, but the darker haired boy knew he wasn't angry or anything, just trying to gather his thoughts. "Kiri told me you were an exchange student in middle school," he started quietly.

Which… was not at all where Sero was thinking this was going to go. He grunted, running a hand over his hair and frowning. "Uh, yeah? I was here for a year before moving back to Handuras. Then my dad left and my mom wanted to get out. To go somewhere new you know?

She got a job offer here in Mustafu and I knew already that I wanted to go to a hero school, so we moved back so I could go to UA." He tilted his head, trying to think of what that had to do with anything. "Why does that matter?"

He watched as the hybrid shifted in his seat before finally turning to face Sero, his face serious, but he could see the hint of hesitation in his conflicted eyes. "You're a part of this pack," he started, and Sero nodded to show he was listening intently. "Just like everyone else. And I'm not going to- to stop you from doing what you need to do or whatever. But…" he grumbled low in his chest, a sound Sero had learned to associate with the fox in him and he sighed. "But if we go through with this, it's for good. It's for life, like Aizawa said. There's no backing out, there's no leaving."

"I get that," Sero shrugged. "I get that it's a big decision, bro. Don't get me wrong, we've all thought about it real hard. It's a big thing to be deciding when we're so young. But I honestly can't imagine a life without the rest of you."

But Katsuki was shaking his head and he ran a hand over the shaved side of his head, scratching at the short hair with a soft *scritch scritch*. "That's not- I mean yeah, that's part of it. But it's… Everyone else grew up here," he tried again, growing angry at the fact that he couldn't get the words to come out right. Sero was patient with him though, knowing this was important. "Everyone else grew up here, has family here. They're staying. So bonding isn't that big of a deal. But you- you came from somewhere else, and then left, and then came back again-" he emphasized, eyes narrowing though not in accusation.

"Oh," the other boy breathed, eyes widening. "You're afraid I'll move back to Handuras."

That protective growl escaped the blonde's chest again, so sharply that even Katsuki looked surprised at it. "You *can't*," Katsuki grit through his teeth, his fists clenching where they were crossed over his chest. Like he was trying to hold himself back. "If you go through with the bond and then- then you *leave* us, it's going to hurt. It's going to tear us apart and we won't recover from that. There's no backing out," he repeated.

And that was… kind of cute, Sero decided. And a legitimate concern, he supposed. At least in Katsuki's mind. He could see why he was freaking out about this, why he was worried Sero might say no. Worried he might say *yes*.

“I know we have a lot still to talk about,” Sero said slowly, taking the calmer approach to his friend since it usually seemed to work. “There’s still a lot about the process we don’t know that Aizawa said he’d tell us once we decided, and more even that we don’t know since you guys are hybrids and we’re human. So,” he said slowly, thinking about it for a moment. “I’m not going to say this isn’t a crazy decision and that we should just jump straight into it. We need to know what we’re getting into, as much as we can at least. But dude, we’re all in,” he said with as much confidence as he could. Katsuki shot him a narrowed glance and Sero smiled. “Seriously, dude. I’m not going anywhere. My mom loves it here. We have a house, she has friends, a job. Besides, she promised we’d stay at least long enough for me to finish school and by then I’ll be old enough to stay. UA is important to me and she knows that. So I’m here. I’m not leaving. I promise.”

“Okay,” Katsuki said, because Sero never lied to him and he knew if Sero said he was staying, then he’d find a way to follow through with that. The dark haired boy watched as the tension quickly seeped out of Katsuki’s shoulders and he picked the controller back up, waggling it in Sero’s direction. “Ready for round two? I won’t go easy on you this time.”

Sero snorted and rolled his eyes. “You’re on, blasty.”

“I just don’t see why I can’t come with you,” Shinsou demanded as he followed Shouta through the house and into the kitchen where his husband was making breakfast, despite it being nearly 3 in the afternoon.

The eraser hero sighed and rubbed at his eyes. “Because it’s too dangerous, Shinsou.”

“I can take care of myself,” the boy tried to argue, his fists clenched at his sides. “Besides, isn’t this what I’m *supposed* to do? I need to learn these things if I’m to be of any use to Katsuki.”

Zashi turned at that, raising an eyebrow from where he was scooping rice into bowls. “What’s going on?”

“Shinsou wants to go to the Ikai with me to gather supplies,” Shouta groaned, rubbing at his head and taking a seat at the table. “Which I’m not going to allow.”

The blonde’s eyebrows rose to his hairline and he snorted, turning towards Shinsou with a knowing look. “You mean the realm full of

creatures that want to eat you because you're some kind or rare delicacy and wouldn't hesitate in killing you the second they saw you?" He questioned, and Shouta was momentarily glad that the other man was on his side. "Yeah, I don't think so little monkey."

Shinsou threw his arms up and let out a frustrated yell. "I'm never going to learn about the Ikai if I don't get the experience! Come *on*, you'll be with me the whole time," he insisted, dropping into the seat across from Shouta and leaning his elbows eagerly on the table. "Mr. Aizawa, *please*," he begged. "I need to help."

And Shouta knew that. He wasn't a Satori like Shinsou was, but he knew the boy had a need deep inside him to serve. Knew that the boy wanted to learn so he could help protect his pack. The thing was, he wasn't like other Satori. He hadn't grown up in the Ikai. He hadn't learned how to survive around all those creatures, all that magick. It'd be completely overwhelming to him, not to mention incredibly dangerous. He'd just managed to get the boy out of an unsafe situation, he wasn't going to be responsible for putting him into another one.

"You'll help by staying here," Shouta said, holding up a hand when the boy opened his mouth to argue. "This isn't up for discussion, Shinsou. I know you can take care of yourself here. I don't doubt that, but the Ikai is a completely different world. It's dangerous and you don't know how to control your yokai yet, not well enough. You've just barely managed to tap into your abilities and going over there is going to be too dangerous." He sighed, running a hand through his hair. "I heard what happened at the sports festival, most of it at least. Kaminari said you were practically out of it the whole time just by knowing the other yokai were *there*. Imagine that pain you were feeling with just two of them and try to imagine it for an entire world."

The stubbornness in the boy's face was gone instantly and his eyebrows furrowed in consideration.

He nodded as the boy gave in. "One day, when you and Katsuki are stronger and you know what you're doing, I'll take you. If that's what you want. But it's too dangerous right now, especially considering the queen doesn't even know about you. You wouldn't have her protection."

The boy frowned at that and shook his head. "Weren't you guys friends or something though? Can't you ask?"

And yes, technically he could. But that would mean telling Mitsuki about them in the first place and Shouta wasn't sure if that was such a good idea. Katsuki had no current wish to meet his mother, and if Mitsuki knew that Shouta had… taken him in, in a way, then she'd demand to see him. Demand to meet him. And she definitely didn't know about Shinsou. "For now it's best if no one knows about the two of you," he said carefully. "It's safer that way, until you're all stronger."

"Yeah but-" the boy began to argue, only to pause midway, his body locking up in what Shouta could only recognize as anticipation and mild panic. It sent both heroes on high alert and Shouta was on his feet in moments.

"Shinsou? Kid- you with us?"

Fingers clutched around Shouta's wrists as he reached out for the boy, and Shinsou's usually purple eyes had a hint of gold in them when he glanced up at the man. "There's someone at the door for you," he said, his voice just barely above a whisper, but his words confused the eraser hero. Surely a guest at the door couldn't send him into a panic like this. He tried to focus his own senses to get some sort of hint as to who it was, but he couldn't smell anything out of the ordinary from where they were in the back of the house. "There's someone at the door," Shinsou repeated, his breath hitching and nails digging into Shouta's skin. "It's not like- like the ones at the school. It's like me- I can feel it in my head."

A yokai.

That's why Shouta couldn't sense it. The wards around the house would keep the other demon out, but Shouta wouldn't have been able to sense it either, not with how strong the wards were. He was surprised Shinsou could sense it at all.

Shit.

"Zashi, take Shinsou to our room and lock the door," Shouta ordered, pushing the shocked boy into his husband's arms. "Don't come out until I come and get you and try to keep him under some blankets or something that smells like us. It won't do much, but it'll help hide him."

The blonde didn't hesitate before launching into action, tugging the boy with him up the stairs quickly and quietly.

Shouta meanwhile made his way to the door, grabbing his capture cloth on his way and running a hand over the inner ward. He'd asked Hinko to place it inside the house for extra protection just in case, though this one was to mask the two yokai that lived there rather than to keep the others out.

The man at the door was unassuming, plain looking in a way. He was tall and lanky, and he hunched his shoulders in a way that made him look smaller than he was, bringing him a bit closer to Shouta's height when their eyes met. And yeah, Shinsou had been right. Even through the layers of wards, Shouta could tell he was a Satori. He couldn't see the man's yokai like Shinsou could, but he could sense it, pressing at his mind like a child poking at it's food. The yokai couldn't get into his mind, he knew that, but it still made him narrow his eyes at the fact that he'd even try.

He didn't recognize the man, but that didn't mean much. The only yokai he knew well were part of the Suki Clan, and it'd been years since he'd seen any of them. He had no idea who was still within the court and who wasn't.

"You have no business here," Shouta said carefully, keeping one hand on the door and the other on the door frame, effectively blocking the man's view of his home.

The other man didn't seem to care, simply bowed his head respectfully and held out an envelope. "Your presence and that of your charges, has been requested for summons."

And your charges.

Shouta tensed, fingers tightening on the wood. "By who?"

"Queen Mitsuki of the Suki Clan," the satori answered easily. "Word has returned to the clan of the prince's survival and he is required to return home now."

"Required," Shouta growled, feeling his tail twitch behind him in a momentary lapse of control. How *dare* they come here and- and- and what? Shouta knew at the time that Mitsuki couldn't have taken Katsuki home with her. He *knew* that. It was safer for the boy here, in hiding with a priestess to watch over him. But now, after meeting the boy, getting to know him… Part of the man was angry that Mitsuki was coming back after all this time, *demanding* something she had no right to. "I have no intention of delivering the boy to the queen. If she wants him, she can come get him herself."

The satori gave a heavy sigh, tired sounding, though he looked like he almost expected this. “She said you’d say that. Which is why I’ve brought this,” he said, raising the envelope again and holding it out. He didn’t get close enough to activate the wards, but Shouta reached out and took it from him quickly. “Your request for the necessary tools for a bonding ceremony have been denied.”

“Under what grounds,” Shouta spat, ripping the envelope open to see the letter inside.

“Under the grounds that the queen knew you wouldn’t follow her orders,” the man replied with a shrug. “I’ve been told to inform you that the young Master Katsuki is welcome to bring his pack with him to the summons, and that the queen herself will assist in the bonding ceremony. Otherwise she will not sanction the bond, nor allow you to return to the Ikai to retrieve the necessary materials. This is a great honor to be had and you would be stupid to decline it.”

Which was true. Having a clan’s queen approve and participate in a bonding ceremony was a blessing to a pack. *Especially* this pack considering how unorthodox it was. Not to mention the fact that they had no idea how hybrids and humans would react to a bonding ceremony so having someone as experienced and powerful as Mitsuki working on it would be a huge help.

But it was *dangerous*.

“The Queen wishes to assure you that any guests that come to her home are under her protection,” the satori reassured him, and if Shouta didn’t know better he’d think the man was in his head somehow. “They will be safe within her walls, even despite their… half-breed status,” he finished unsurely.

Which was interesting to him because so far the satori had only mentioned Katsuki and Shinsou, though never by name for the second boy. Most likely he knew very little about them, only that they existed. He hadn’t mentioned anyone else in the pack other than the general statement that there was one, so he probably didn’t know they were human.

“I’ll talk to them,” he growled out. “But if they agree, then you tell Mitsuki not a single one of them is to be harmed while we are there. Not a *single one*.”

“I will inform the queen.”

Chapter End Notes

Finally digging into the Kitsune stuff more! Wooo! I still have a lot of plans for canon stuff too, so I hope you guys are okay with this being a LONG story. I've thought about breaking it up and doing a part two or something, but I'm not sure. I feel like it'd just be easier to have it all in one spot but I don't want to intimidate people if the word count starts getting too high? Idk, i'd love your opinions.

Translations:
Sero, ¿quién está en la puerta? – Sero, who is at the door?
Es mi amigo de la escuela, Katsuki. – It's my friend from school, Katsuki.

Chapter 27: The Ikai

Chapter Summary

We take a journey into another world.

Chapter Notes

SURPRISE! Two chapters in one day! I'm like, super stoked for this next little mini arc so I'm like, pumping through it. Don't worry, we'll be in the Ikai for a little while so there's plenty to see. Anyway, here you go!

No warnings here.

As a side note if you want to check out Chapter 21 again, I added some more art. I figured instead of doing a new chapter for art, I'll just update that chapter. So check it out :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The temple behind Auntie Hinko's shop was old, but extremely well taken care of. It was beautiful in a way, even if Katsuki didn't really care much about architecture or whatever. He could still admit it looked powerful, ancient… otherworldly. It was painted a deep red with accents of shimmering gold along the windows and molding. Two large statues of foxes sat on either side of the front steps, each with three tails- the average amount according to Aizawa. Through the open doors, he could see the small rock garden that led to a shrine in the far end, tapestries and prayers hanging from the ceiling.

And as much as Katsuki hated to admit it, something familiar settled in his chest the closer he got to the building. Something that felt too much like home and he hated every second of it.

"It's so pretty!" Mina squealed at his side, grabbing onto his arm and shaking it slightly. "How have you *never* been here before?"

The Kitsune shrugged but didn't pull out of her grip. "Never needed too and Auntie told me it'd be too dangerous."

The whole pack was there now, in that place Katsuki had always avoided, with Aizawa and Auntie Hinko standing at the top of the stairs waiting for them. They were each dressed in their nicest hakamas, all varying colours and designs. It was… weird to see.

Katsuki had rarely seen them in anything other than school uniforms or their civilian clothes. Seeing them in something so formal outside of a festival was interesting.

Shouto's hakama was probably the nicest, which made sense. He'd asked Fuyumi to bring it to him, saying it wasn't actually his since he hadn't needed to wear one in so long. So Fuyumi had brought him Touya's instead. Katsuki had barely managed to stop the barrage of kisses he wanted to give the boy upon seeing him in the deep black and blue outfit. It was… definitely something.

Izu was dressed in a deep green hakama that complimented his eyes too well, Katsuki in a white and orange one with black accents. Mina of course was head to toe in pinks and baby blues, like the Sakura trees painted across her silks. Kirishima was decked out in blacks and reds, while Kaminari and Sero were battling it out with different shades of yellows, blacks, and whites. Shinsou's hakama was simple blacks and greys, almost matching Aizawa's perfectly.

What surprised him most was probably Hatsume, who stood near Izuku with an interested look on her face. He almost hadn't recognized her when she first appeared, might not have if it weren't for her bright pink dreadlocks. She'd forgone all of her techs and tools, her goggles missing from her head and her skin clean of any grime and oil. He'd never seen her so cleaned up before and he… wasn't sure how he felt about it.

Part of him felt honored that she'd taken the time for this, that she'd cleaned up to make a good impression on whoever it was they were meeting. The other part of him hated that she *needed* to change at all. He'd gotten used to the smell of oil and soot that covered her an Izuku at any given time. The sharp scent of soap was new and he didn't quite like it.

"You don't have to go through with this," Aizawa assured him once they'd all gathered at the top of the steps. Momma Inko stood off to the side, wringing her hands nervously as she spoke with Auntie Hinko, but Katsuki's attention was on his teacher. On the serious tone to his voice. "I'm not forcing you, and I won't allow them to force you either."

"But it's the only way, right?" Katsuki asked, turning his glare onto the temple as if it'd personally offended him. "The only way to do the bond now that they know?" Katsuki knew the answer without Aizawa telling him, but the grimace on the teacher's face only solidified his

suspicions and the young fox sighed. “Then it’s fine. If you think it’s safe, then I trust you. I don’t care if she’s my- I don’t care *who* the queen is. If we have to show up and ask her permission or whatever, then that’s what we’ll do.’

Aizawa hummed, looking for something in Katsuki’s eyes that might tell him the boy didn’t want to do this.

And he *didn’t*. Katsuki didn’t *want* to go into the Ikai to meet his mother. He had no desire to see her at all. Sure, Momma Inko had told him that she was a good woman, that she’d only left him there out of necessity. But it didn’t matter. It didn’t matter because she’d still left him. She’d never contacted him or sent someone to check on him. He’d never heard from her at all. Not to mention the fact that if she didn’t want a damned half-breed child, then she shouldn’t have fucking had one.

But it didn’t matter now because Katsuki didn’t care. He *didn’t*. He was doing this for the pack, because it’d be safer for them if they were bonded. Because his fox was prowling inside of him like an impatient animal. If going face to face with his mother was what it took, then he’d do it.

“Okay,” Aizawa nodded, seemingly satisfied. He waved to the others to gather close and took a deep breath. “Pay attention closely because this is extremely important,” he began, shooting Kaminari and Kirishima a sharp look in pre-emptive warning. “When we enter the Ikai, you will become prey. You will be nothing to them but ants under their boots. Humans are pests to the yokai, and just because you’ve been chosen by a Kitsune for his pack, it will not give you leeway or safety, not until you’re bonded,” he told them. And there was no argument in his voice, no room for falsehoods or bluffs. Katsuki knew this was just as dangerous as he was putting out to be, and the others shifted closer behind him, like they could sense it too. “The same goes for you two,” he continued, gaze landing on Shinsou and Katsuki. “You’re in just as much danger as they are until the bonding, Shinsou even more so considering he doesn’t have royal blood in him.”

Izuku was tense at Katsuki’s side, gripping at one of his hands tightly. “I thought we had protection?”

Aizawa nodded. “You do, but only to an extent. When we cross into the Ikai temple, you will be in Suki Clan territory, the palace to be exact. I’ve been guaranteed that all of you are to be protected and

treated as normal guests while we're there. The queen has promised it herself." Katsuki struggled not to flinch at the mention of his mother, but if Shouto's fingers lacing with his free ones were anything to go by, he didn't quite manage it. "But as much as I trust Mitsuki, I do not trust her people. The Kitsune in her clan are relatively peaceful, but there has never been a human to pass into her walls and certainly not a hybrid. We cannot know how they will react. Because of this, you will *not* leave mine or Katsuki's side," he instructed with a stern tone.

Someone in the back of their group must have raised a hand, because the older yokai shot them a glare.

"This is not up for discussion, Kaminari. You leave one of us and you die. End of story," he said sharply. "Until you are bonded, you will stay with one of us at all times, and after the bonding, you'll do the same. Do you understand?"

There was a series of nods and 'yes's from the group and Aizawa let out a slow breath.

"Are we meeting the queen then?" Mina asked almost excitedly. "She's Kaachan's mom right?"

"She's not my *mom*," the blonde spat back, much to his own surprise. The girl blinked at him with wide eyes but Katsuki glanced away, shrinking into himself a bit. "She just gave birth to me. That's it."

Aizawa brushed past the confrontation with a shrug and waved a hand. "You will be meeting with the queen. Mitsuki is…" he paused, rolling words around in his head in consideration before continuing. "She's a lot, but overall she's a good person. She won't harm you unless you give her reason, and if she says you will be safe in her walls, then you will be. But do not let that make you comfortable," he warned darkly. "You *must* be on your best behavior. The yokai are very traditional creatures. Their culture is different than yours and you will be expected to act properly in front of royalty. The queen is friendly, but she is still dangerous. Do not be such fools as to insult her, got it?" Another series of nods and the man sighed. "One more thing, under no circumstances whatsoever will you leave the palace. You shouldn't since you won't be leaving our sight, but if for any reason whatsoever you get separated from us, you will *not* leave the palace. Mitsuki has control there and you've been given protection, but the second you step outside of her walls, we cannot guarantee anything. You'd be free game and you wouldn't make it three steps."

“Do we need to like, bow and stuff?” Sero asked, raising his hand at the question.

“When we arrive, we’ll be escorted to the guest quarters where we’ll be staying,” Aizawa answered instead. “I’ll explain the proper ettiquite then but it’s not much different than it is here. Bowing is considered polite, but you don’t need to get down on your knees or anything.” He took a deep breath and half turned, pausing slightly as if something just came to him. “As a side note, try not to use your quirks. They aren’t forbidden or anything, but the yokai don’t have them and they don't usually work on yokai anyway. Still, it’s best not to make yourselves look any more special than you already are. And you,” he said, pointing a finger in Katsuki’s direction, making the boy straighten his back in anticipation. “Do *not* show them your fox. Don’t let your tails show, or your ears. Kiko’s are blessed creatures and if they see it…”

The sentence trailed off, but Katsuki didn’t need him to finish it. “If they see it, they might not let me leave,” he mumbled.

Aizawa nodded, turning towards where Auntie Hinko and Momma Inko were waiting, the latter much more nervous if the wringing of her hands were anything to go by.

“We shouldn’t be gone long,” he told them with a grimace. “Time over there is… unpredictable, but it shouldn’t be anymore than a few days here, if that. As far as the parents are concerned, we’re on a field trip. Nezu will back that up if needed, he’s aware of what’s going on.” His gaze landed on the priestess. “Once we cross over, close the gate again. I don’t want anything following us through in either direction. How the satori got through in the first place, I’ll have to figure out. When we’re ready, I’ll have a letter sent through to you to reopen it.”

Auntie Hinko nodded and patted the man on the cheek with a smile. “Of course darling. You take care of our little ones.”

Katsuki watched as Momma Inko took a step forward and took one of Aizawa’s hands in hers, her eyes narrowed and stern. “You bring my kids back, you hear me? I am not afraid to march in there and find Mitsuki myself if I have to. So you tell her no funny business.” Aizawa nodded in agreement, letting go of the green-haired woman to take an old bottle of something from her. “And give this to her for me. Tell her she should come visit sometime. I’m tired of drinking on my own.”

With that, she turned towards the three boys standing at the front of

the group. She put a hand on Izuku and Shouto's shoulders, smiling at them both before settling her gaze on Katsuki. There was something like fear in her eyes, in the sharp scents that attacked the blonde's senses, but her face was calm and her hands steady as she framed his face.

"Katsuki, dear," she began, eyes shimmering with unshed tears. "You be careful over there okay? You protect the boys, and your pack. But you protect yourself too, okay?" She demanded, waiting for him to nod in understanding. "And don't let them bully you into doing anything you don't want to. You've got your people here, and I'll support you in whatever decisions you make, but- but if you don't want to-"

You don't have to stay.

He knew what she was telling him. And it was stupid.

He wasn't going to stay. He didn't *want* to. He didn't want to go in the first place, why would he want to stay? But he didn't know how to tell her that, so instead he just shot forward, wrapping his arms around her and squeezing in the hopes that she would understand. The hopes that she'd know what he wanted to tell her.

You're my mom. Not her. Never her.

"They're waiting for us," Aizawa interrupted quietly, and when Katsuki turned to look at him, there was a shimmer in the air behind him, settling in the frame of the temple like a layer of water that rippled with every breeze. With a deep breath, he nodded and pulled back, grabbing onto Izuku and Shouto's hands again instead. A quick glance around the group told him that the others were equally nervous and excited, but they were all waiting for some sort of instruction on what to do next.

"Going through the veil will feel strange," Aizawa warned them. "It might make you a bit sick, but it'll pass quickly. We'll be met with guards who will lead us to our room. No one there is aware that most of you are human," he told them and the others tensed at that information. "They are aware the pack is coming, but not who you are. Do not let them intimidate you, but do not threaten them either. Stick close to me. Shinsou," he said, straightening his shoulders out of their usual slump and turning to face the purple haired boy. "As the Satori of the pack, you're considered Katsuki's right hand. You'll go first with me to announce the arrival. Don't worry," he said quickly

when the boy's eyes widened. "I'll do the announcing, but pay attention because if the need ever arises to return, it will be your job to introduce the pack. After we go through, Katsuki and the others will follow. Consider this a mission." The others perked up at that and tired eyes scanned each and every one of them individually. "Your mission is to get in, perform your tasks as needed, and get out alive. Be on your best behavior. If you're unsure of something, ask me. Are you ready?"

Katsuki took a deep breath, swallowing past the sudden lump of nerves in his throat.

He could do this. *He could do this.*

Aizawa turned and took a step into the veil. A moment later, Katsuki followed.

"This is ridiculous! You cannot possibly be considering this- this bonding!" Hideko growled as she paced the great hall in front of her mother, her deep, burnt orange hakama and her blonde hair fluttering behind her in her anger. The sharp orange marks across her cheekbones shimmered with her tamashii, brighter now with her burning anger behind it. "Did you hear what the guards said? They brought *humans* with them. Not only are they hybrids, but they're trying to make a pack out of *humans*. That- I didn't even know that was allowed and you're just sitting there letting it happen!"

Mitsuki was silent through her tirade, her red eyes trailing after the girl back and forth as she stalked.

Hideko had always been a high spirited girl, no doubt taking after her mother, but she had unfortunately gotten her temper from her father and it was practically vicious. It suited her nicely when the time came for it. She would do well in the future, with an army at her back. She had a mind for strategy and warfare just like her father, and with how the clans had been faring lately, Mitsuki was sure those skills would come to play sooner rather than later. But her attitude could be dangerous sometimes when not tempered. Like a flame that could easily destroy everything in its path if just the wrong breeze fluttered by. And right now that breeze was Katsuki.

Mitsuki honestly hadn't expected she'd ever meet the boy. She'd wanted to of course, but she hadn't even known if he was *alive* or not and she couldn't very well send anyone to check. Not with the king at her side. He'd been angry enough when he'd found out about her

bastard, even angrier once he found out that Katsuki was born within clan laws of wedlock. It'd been before her marriage to the king, but it hadn't mattered. The fact that Katsuki had held power over Hideko to claim the throne had never sat well with the angry old fool.

Killing him hadn't quite been part of the plan, but he was growing on her nerves and she couldn't stand it anymore. So, the old man had to go. Hideko hadn't been too upset about it in the end.

"Hideko, darling, please calm down. You'll burn a hole in my new rug and Auntie Leika just finished weaving it," Mitsuki sighed, leaning back on her cushion in an attempt to show the girl how to *relax*. "You should be happy," she tried again with a shrug. "You're to meet your brother for the first time. This is an exciting experience."

"He is *not* my brother," Hideko snapped, her pointed teeth glittering in the lantern light and Mituski rolled her eyes at the dramatics of it all. "He is *nothing* but a hybrid bastard. He shouldn't even be allowed here!"

Mitsuki rolled her head lazily on her shoulders, tired of this argument they'd been having for months- ever since Shouta had send his requests for bonding materials. "He's not a bastard, and he *is* your brother," she grumbled tiredly. "I expect you to be on your best behavior while he and his pack are here. They are our guests and you represent this family, I expect you to act like it. I will not have you embarrassing us because you are jealous of your brother. Do you understand?"

Hideko stared at the older blonde for a long moment before sighing, tears welling up in her eyes as she pouted. "I don't understand why he's *here*."

And Mitsuki had always been weak for Hideko's tantrums, weak to her tears and her pouts. So she held her arms out and motioned the girl forward, petting at her long, spikey hair when she finally collapsed in front of her. "Dear, he is not here to replace you," Mitsuki said simply, placing her hands gently on her daughter's shoulders. "From what Shouta has told me, the boy simply wants the bonding and then he will be going home."

"He doesn't belong here," Hideko tried again.

"Perhaps not, but this is his home just as much as it is yours," the queen shrugged, wiping away a tear on the girl's cheek. "I understand this is difficult for you. I understand that you didn't know about him

until recently and that it hurts you," she said carefully. "But Katsuki is here because I asked it and he has come. Do not make this harder on any of us by acting like a child." The girl opened her mouth to argue, but Mitsuki's stare shut her up before she could. "You want to run this clan one day when I'm gone, yes?" The girl nodded and Mitsuki smiled. "Then you will act like the queen you wish to be. You will treat them with respect and you will welcome them into our home. This is a joyous occasion, Hide. Katsuki was not meant to live this long in the first place, *and* if the rumors are true, he's been blessed with a second tail."

Hide pouted, swishing her three orange tails behind her. "I have more."

Mitsuki snorted and rolled her eyes. "Yes, you do. But you are pure Kitsune. Katsuki is not. My point is that he is an anomaly. He is a blessing as much as he is an unknown. And what do I always say about unknowns?"

"That we must know them," Hideko recited with a frown. "Will you go through with the bonding then? Even though he's brought humans with him? They hadn't told us they would be bringing humans."

Mitsuki hummed at the change in subject, leaning back onto her cushion again and rolling the idea around in her head.

It was true that Shouta hadn't told her about the others. She wasn't *surprised* that he'd kept it from her necessarily, but she had been surprised when she found out. Humans would occasionally wander into the Ikai on accident, but they were never invited. They were never *guests*. And she had never, *ever* heard of them bonding into a pack.

It would be an experience indeed.

"I cannot say if it will even work," she shrugged. "But Katsuki seems sure and I don't see why it wouldn't if the bonds between them are strong enough. Now come, go get ready. They'll be joining us for the feast tonight and we must look our best if we're to make a good impression."

"Yes mother."

But Hideko didn't linger in her rooms once she'd gotten ready. She didn't wait around and sit in waiting. No, her curiosity was too sharp,

scratching at her skin like an irate cat that she couldn't get rid of.

Because there were strangers in her home. Strangers she hadn't invited and didn't want there. Mother might not have thought they were a threat, but they *were*. They had to be because why would he have come back if not to lead the clan? What would have been the point? Hide couldn't imagine her... couldn't imagine the hybrid could really have come back with good intentions. If she were in his place, she knew she'd take the opportunity to take her place. And he could if he wanted to. He really could. Hideko had been the heir to the throne until recently when news of the boy had come out. She'd been who everyone turned to, who they looked towards when something was needed. She'd been the one they all crooned about, praising her sharp mind and her extensive skills. Only for *him* to come back and threaten everything she'd worked for.

And that wasn't fair. It wasn't, because Hide had been the one to be there. Hide had been the one who went through the years and *years* of training, the one who would go through centuries more if needed in order to make her ready to rule the clan. She had worked so *hard* and this… half-blooded thing was threatening everything she'd ever worked for.

And he'd brought humans with him to do it.

And they weren't even anything special, she thought as she watched them from across the courtyard.

They'd all been put up in one of the biggest guest rooms and she could see them through their open shoji. The garden stood between her and the mismatched pack, but it didn't matter. She could see each and every one of them from where she stood.

They were… colourful, she supposed, which was something she hadn't expected. She'd heard of humans being bland and stupid, though her mother had always insisted that they were actually quite fun. Still, she hadn't quite expected something so… *bright*. Some of them had strange hair, coloured in reds and pinks and yellows, and one of them was scarred across the face.

She wondered if he'd already seen battle. If he stood as one of the protectors of this little pack.

None of them quite looked like they fit together other than the fact that the majority of them were piled messily on the cushions and pillows that were sprawled across the floors. Like a bastardization of a

Kitsune fox pile. The scarred one was standing at the door, staring out towards the garden with a strange, haunted look on its face and there was a little green one that stood next to him, their fingers intertwined.

Mates, she figured curiously.

The Satori was there too, the one she'd been told about. He was scary looking, with his long limbs and the dark bags under his eyes, but there was a blonde latched onto him with a smile big enough to make even Hideko cringe. The Satori didn't seem to mind.

And then there was *him*.

Katsuki.

Her brother.

It was obvious they were related. They had the same spikey blonde hair as their mother, though Hideko's was long and down to her shoulders while Katsuki's was shorn on the sides and long on top. They had the same sharp bone structure, the same pale skin… the same red eyes. It couldn't be denied that he was in fact Mitsuki's.

Part of her had hoped he would look different. That he'd look like his human father and that no one would believe he was truly her mother's heir. But the fates were fickle things and it seemed she would not be so lucky.

Even worse was that she could *see* the bond between them all. Not literally, not in the sense of the red tethers that might tie them all together once all was said and done. But it was no doubt that they were all deeply connected. The way they gravitated towards the sole Kitsune of the group, the way they all hung off each other and snuggled up with the others. The way the scarred one let Katsuki nuzzle his nose up against the back of his neck like they were mated. They were only human and yet- and yet they acted so much like a yokai pack that it made her stomach churn.

She hadn't even managed to build her own pack yet, and here he was, spreading their traditions and their culture out to those who had no idea how it worked. Had no idea how important it was or what it all meant. Had no idea how *sacred* their teachings were to them.

Red eyes found her across the courtyard in an instant and she could see him lock up around the scarred human, could see his muscles tense and his teeth glint in the sunlight like he was trying to growl at

her from so far away. The scarred one and the green one stared at her as well, but she didn't break eye contact with Katsuki.

She couldn't. Something told her if she did, she'd lose.

Three tails swished behind her lazily. Mother would call her prideful for drawing attention to them, but she couldn't help it in that instance because Katsuki didn't have *any*. She didn't know how he was able to hide them in the Ikai, he wasn't supposed to be able to, but she didn't care. She didn't because she had *more* than him and they were nearly the same age. Which meant she was better than him. She was more blessed by the kami, by the gods. She was more fit to rule this clan than he would ever be-

"Mistress, your mother has called us to the dining hall."

The servant beside her bowed, dual tails flickering back and forth anxiously behind him and she finally, *finally* drew her gaze away from the strangers in her mother's guest room.

Perhaps she would challenge him before the bonding, she mused as she let the servant lead her away, not daring to look back at the red eyes that followed her. He would not be allowed to deny the challenge and her mother could not stop it. Perhaps then the clan would see, her *mother* would see, that he wasn't fit to take care of them. That he wasn't fit to be *king*.

Yes, yes I believe I will.

Chapter End Notes

> So I kind of realized that Hideko has the same sort of attitude that canon-Katsuki does but with more tears. And you know, I'm down for it. I love her. Hope you guys do too.
>
> Onward my friends! To the next chapter! (Tomorrow after I write it XD)

Chapter 28: No Apologies

Chapter Summary

Mitsuki is amused, Shinsou is *nervous*, and Shouta is done.

Chapter Notes

Wow it's been a hot second. Sorry guys! This chapter was harder to write than I expected and with holidays and everything, it took a little longer than I thought.
Writing Mitsuki was hard and I wasn't quite sure how I wanted this introduction to happen. It took me like three tries to get it right and I'm still not completely happy with it. But ce la vie, here we are! Hope it's still okay!

Trigger warning: small panic attack at the beginning of the chapter.

They were just doors.

Katsuki knew that. There was nothing special about the traditional doors in front of him. Nothing special about the way they looked or how big they were. They were just… doors.

And yet the sight of them drew anxiety through his throat like hot acid, raking like nails across his skin and digging into his ribs hard enough he was sure they were going to crack under the pressure. And logically he knew he shouldn't be nervous. He knew there was no logical reason for the anxiety in his gut. He knew this woman held no importance in his actual life, knew that she could never replace what he already had. But there was still a crisis battling it out in his head, like his fox wanted to move forward but his human wanted to run away. But he couldn't… Because she currently held his pack's future in his hands, held *his* future in her hands. And he didn't know how to feel about it all.

He didn't know if he was supposed to like her, if he was supposed to forgive her for abandoning him. Auntie Hinko had explained why she had, so he *knew*, but it still… it still felt like a hole in his chest. And that pissed him off because he didn't know why he *cared*.

"Kaachan?"

The walls around them felt too close for comfort, the fabric of his hakama scratchy against his *too human* skin.

Gods, this was stupid. He couldn't understand why he was panicking. Why his heart wouldn't slow down no matter how hard he tried to force it to.

"Kaachan, you need to breathe for me okay? Can you do that? Follow my breathing, okay."

Breathe? How was he supposed to breathe when he had to focus so hard on keeping his fur under his skin? On keeping his tails and ears hidden like Aizawa had warned him to.

His hand was pressed against something solid and warm, rising and falling, up and down. A voice was flowing through his ears like a gentle breeze but it slipped through his fingers and he couldn't seem to grasp their meaning.

"What can I do to help-"

"-ur usually helps. He needs to transform but he can't-"

"Maybe this-"

His other hand found something soft, strands of it like silk through his fingers, under his palm. *Like fur but longer… smoother.* He clutched at it, pulling it closer and digging his nose into the spot where it met with soft skin, the scent warm and familiar and *home*. There was a steady beat to follow, one gentle against his lips and the other pulsing under his fingertips. Neither of them on beat with each other, but so similar it felt like music.

"*Fuck*," he grumbled once he'd finally managed to drag himself out of the water that threatened to pull him under.

Izuku and Shouto were pressed up against him, having dragged him a bit down the hall and away from the others so as not to crowd him. Katsuki had his chest up against Shouto's, his face pressed into the taller boy's neck and his right hand dug into red hair. Izuku was facing them both, Katsuki's hand under his as he pressed it tight over his heart, his smile gentle and comforting as the blonde pulled himself back to the surface of his panic.

"S'rry," he breathed.

But Izuku shook his head and his fingers tightened around Katsuki's. "Don't be. This is stressful. I'd be worried if you *weren't* feeling overwhelmed," he smiled. "Are you okay or do you need some more time?"

He needed *all the time*. He needed to not be here in the first place. But that wasn't an option. Not with his pack being at risk because of him, not with the fox under his skin *needing* this bonding.

"I'm fine," he answered, taking another deep breath of frost and firewood and then stepping back. There was another moment where he kept his hands where they were before he forced himself to let go, drawing in a ragged breath with the motion. He turned towards the rest of the pack, thankful that they'd all fallen into their own conversations to give him some space, and met Aizawa's slightly concerned raised eyebrow. He took a long second to come to back to himself and straightened his shoulders. "Let's get this fuckin' over with. What are we all standin' around for?"

Thankfully, no one called him out on his bullshit, instead gathering back around each other and around Katsuki like some sort of pack shield. It felt… nice. Though he'd never admit it.

They came to a huddle outside of what Aizawa called the grand hall. Two cats stood at attention on either side of the main door, both with dual tails that irked Katsuki's already tense nerves considering how his last interaction with a nekomata went, but the cats paid them no mind and the pro hero seemed unbothered with their presence as he turned to face the group.

"Remember what I said," he instructed, keeping his voice low, but just loud enough for them all to hear. "Best behavior from everyone. We're going to enter into the center of the room and wait until the queen comes in and is introduced. Shinsou, you'll be with me at the front for our own introductions. When she gives permission, we'll take our seats. This isn't a formal event," he said, and Katsuki's shoulders slumped slightly in relief. "But you'll still be expected to act as you would in front of royalty. Do not address the queen unless she addresses you first, same goes for any other court members present."

Katsuki took a deep breath, and after giving his teacher a nod, the doors were pulled open.

The 'hall' honestly wasn't as large as he was expecting. More of a large open room a bit bigger than their classroom with shoji walls that let

the light in from outside and soft bamboo floors. Beautiful lanterns hung around the walls, lighting the room up in reds and oranges and golds, and in the center of the room was a row of low tables and cushions, all facing the table at the head of the room. More Nekomatas lined the walls as guards, but it was the girl in front of them that drew Katsuki's attention the most.

He'd seen her across the courtyard earlier that day, but those eyes- so identical to his own- still shocked him to his core. They were almost a mirror image, the two of them. Their hair the same shade, though hers was longer, their eyes the same. Even sitting he could tell they were roughly the same height. Katsuki was more muscled, but even from the small distance he could tell the girl was muscled enough to hold her own.

She glowered at him from her cushion, her bright orange silks draped around her like her own little pond, watching as him as Aizawa led them each to their various cushions. Three orange tails twisted behind her.

Katsuki was placed in the center table, Izuku and Shouto on either side of him, Shinsou to Katsuki's right and the others spread out seemingly randomly. The older Yokai did not sit with them, instead making his way to the front where another table was set up to the right of where Katsuki assumed his mo- assumed the queen would be sitting. The other girl took up the cushion to the queen's left.

The queen however, was nowhere to be seen.

Aizawa met the girl's eyes with a bow before taking his seat, but the others remained standing.

It felt like an entire age had passed before the doors behind his teacher opened and the queen stepped out.

The sight of her made Katsuki's hackles rise, bile settling in the back of his throat like a threat. Because- because she looked *just like him*. Or rather, he looked just like her. He'd known, logically he'd known. Momma Inko didn't have any pictures of the woman, but she'd told him plenty of times how similar he looked to the woman. He just hadn't realized how *deep* the similarities ran.

Mitsuki was an imposing woman. Tall and thin, though covered in lithe, capable muscles that showed her strength. Her hair was cut short like his, spiked out in various directions and the exact same yellow-white as his own. There was an almost feral look to her sharp

grin and her red eyes that Katsuki recognized all too well. She wore simple but beautiful silks in various shades of purples and whites, folded and pleated and tied perfectly, not a single strand of hair or fold of fabric out of place. The vulpine ears that stuck out of her hair were long and pointed, a soft but beautiful yellow-orange, matching the five tails that swirled behind her. They were the only part of them that was different aside from a large scar that traveled down the side of the woman's throat.

And there was a presence about the woman that had Katsuki rolling his shoulders and lifting his chin, something that made the fox in him want to challenge her. Made him want to show his own tails, his own fur. Which was… probably not the best idea.

"Shouta!" The woman crooned, walking straight up to their teacher and pulling him up and into a hug tight enough to make the man grunt. She placed sloppy kisses on his cheeks and laughed at his grimace before pulling away. "Look at you! All grown up! I haven't seen you in ages!"

"Hasn't been that long for me," he grunted, rolling his eyes, but Katsuki could see the softness around his edges when the woman addressed him. It was the same softness he had around their pack and … Katsuki's fox did *not* like that. Not at all."But it's nice to see you again, Mitsu. You gonna sit down so we can do this all properly or are you going to continue to make a fool of yourself in front of guests?"

Despite his blatant disrespect, the woman snorted a laugh and fluttered a hand in his direction before making her way to her own cushion- much larger and brighter coloured than the others. She dropped down on it ungracefully and sprawled back onto her hands, grinning up at the cat. "Go on then, you old grump. I'm impatient."

"As always," he sighed before turning towards the room, his tone of voice deadpanned and greatly suggesting that he'd rather be anywhere but there. Mitsuki didn't seem to mind. "By blessings of the Suki Clan, we welcome our Sekai kin and guests with open arms and familiar hearts. You shall call me Shouta, hand of the Suki Clan and guardian of her majesty." He gestured an open hand towards the girl beside Mitsuki, and Katsuki could see him holding back a grimace, his eyes meeting Katsuki's in an apologetic glance. "I introduce her royal highness, princess Hideko, second born and honored."

The girl pursed her lips at the comment of her birth, but straightened her back anyway, nodding politely to them all. (Katsuki tried his best

not to react to the fact that he had a *sister*. Because now was *not* the time to panic again.)

Aizawa gestured towards Mitsuki next. “And her royal majesty, Mitsuki, five tailed and first born, blessed and honored leader of the Suki Clan.”

The queen gave them all a Cheshire grin, though her eyes were laser focused on Katsuki. “Blessed to meet you all,” she said truthfully.

“And may I introduce-“

Mituski held up a sharp hand to cut Aizawa off, rolling her eyes at his raised brow. “Don’t give me that look you little shit,” she laughed, waving towards Shinsou. “They have a satori don’t they? If you’re so insistent on this being proper, then let him do the introductions as he’s supposed to.”

Aizawa frowned. “He doesn’t know-“

“I’m sure he’ll do fine,” the queen dismissed, turning back towards Shinsou with a raised brow. “Well? Go on then, little monkey.”

Shinsou was tense, glancing at Katsuki with an impassive face but wide eyes, waiting for permission or any sign of what to do. With nothing else to do, Katsuki gave him a nod and watched as his purple haired friend took a deep breath and a small step forward.

He bowed slightly towards the front of the room before speaking. “We are blessed to be accepted into your home and protection,” he began, his voice only slightly hesitant as he spoke, growing stronger when he straightened up from the bow. “You may call me Hitoshi, speaker and protector for this pack. May I introduce our pack members,” he said, turning to begin at the side closest to him, gesturing to each member of the pack as he introduced them by given name and waiting until they’ve bowed politely to move on to the next. He paused only when he came to the final three beside him, glancing towards Aizawa for a moment as he debated on his next words.

“And may I introduce his highness’s partners, Shouto of the Todoroki family, and Izuku of the Midoriya family.” Mitsuki sat up straight at that, her eyes practically twinkling as they fell on Izuku, but to Katsuki’s relief, she didn’t interrupt when the satori moved on, gesturing towards Katsuki last. “And his royal highness, Prince Katsuki, two-tailed and first born, blessed and honored leader of this pack.”

Katsuki didn't bow like the others, but he gave a sharp bob of his head, trying desperately to keep the sneer off his lips when the queen laughed.

"Look at him Shouta! He's practically seething," she cackled, slamming her hands on her table and leaning forward with eager eyes. "He's got spunk! That's good, you'll need it here, kid," she addressed him directly before turning her gaze towards Izuku. Katsuki tensed slightly at the action, just barely stopping himself from stepping in front of the greenette. "And you! Little green one, aren't you just the cutest? I'd recognize that hair anywhere. How's your mother dear? I do hope I didn't burden her too much with this little spitfire."

Izuku rubbed the back of his neck and laughed, anxiety and awkwardness lacing the sound. "No, I- um… Kaa- Katsuki has been great, your majesty. And my mother is well, though she um- she wishes you'd visit."

Mitsuki hummed, pressing her lips together in a pout before nodding. "Yes, well, I miss her so much. I'll have to do that soon. Now, you-" she said quickly, moving back towards Shinsou with a manic looking grin. Honestly, Katsuki figured if this was how she acted on a regular basis, he was going to get whiplash from trying to keep up. "Tell the truth now, did Shouta give you any training before this? Because for your first time presenting you did a marvelous job! And for a hybrid nonetheless!"

A soft blush dusted across Shinsou's cheeks, deepening only when Kaminari elbowed him in the side and gave a big grin. "I was not given training, no. Mr. Aizawa- uh… Shouta?" He asked hesitantly, the name awkward on Katsuki's ears but their teacher bobbed his head for him to continue. "He just told us that we'd be introduced."

"And yet you were nearly perfect in your introductions," she complimented.

Katsuki preened at that, finding himself smirking at the evident surprise in the queen's tone. His fox wanted to show off, to point out just how strong and capable each member of his pack was, to show that they were worthy and he was proud of them. Instead he stood with his chin raised and a grin on his face as Shinsou cleared his throat.

"I simply mimicked what Ai-Shouta did, your majesty. In many of our own cultures, the most important person enters the room last, as you

did," the satori's voice sounded just as dead as it always did, just as dead as Aizawa's, but the wide eyes and hesitance to his stance told Katsuki how nervous his friend was. His quirk may be voice activated, but he wasn't the talker of their group. "You were also the last to be introduced, so I figured it was the same here. That introductions were given by order of importance."

Mitsuki hummed, leaning forward onto her hand and grinning like a cat that'd caught a canary. "Well aren't you a smart one? And you are correct. My only criticism is that you didn't announce the titles of your pack members, only yourself, Katsuki, and his… partners you said? What does that mean?"

Shinsou tensed again, turning to Katsuki with a questioning gaze before they looked to Aizawa for guidance. When the man gave none, only raised an eyebrow, Shinsou sighed. "Other than myself and Katsuki, we don't have titles," he said carefully. "I'm not sure how much you know of our own world, but we are heroes in training. We have hero names if you'd like those, but as for pack dynamics or additional descriptors that might fit what you're looking for, there are none."

"Oh don't worry, I will absolutely be asking more about your little hero work," she laughed, the sound loud and obnoxious to Katsuki's ears. "And my other question? Little Izuku and Shouto, you two got your own introductions which means you're very important in this pack. Tell me what that means," she said eagerly.

It didn't sound like one, but Katsuki knew it was an order. One that had both of his boyfriends tensing at his sides, no doubt nervous at being directly addressed.

"It means they're *mine*," Katsuki said quickly before the others could answer, taking a single step forward to place himself a bit ahead of the others. He didn't go far, the table and cushion before him in his way, but he stood tall and sure, even as those blood red eyes found his instantly.

Something new and exciting lit up in the woman's face, her posture straightening as she leaned forward again. "Oh? I hadn't seen their marks! I didn't think you'd be *mated* already," she beamed, clapping her hands together. "Oh marvelous! I mean, it's a bit nontraditional to mate before the bonding, but who am I to judge, hm? Oh and look at them, both so adorable and no doubt very strong if they're able to handle my little Katsuki-"

A low growl ripped its way out of Katsuki's chest before he could stop it, rippling through the room like a stone on water. The cats on the edges of the room all froze with the noise and Aizawa tensed from his own position at the front of the room.

Mituski didn't seem bothered by the warning, though she did raise a cool eyebrow, a smirk falling on her lips. "Oh, and you've got your mother's temper, don't you?"

"I'm not *yours*," he spat, feeling his fangs elongate as he bared his teeth, his claws poking dangerously at his palms as he clenched his fist. It was taking everything in him not to let the flicker of his tails show in the hopes of intimidating the woman. He knew it wouldn't work, and would only serve to get them in more trouble. But gods did he *want* to. "You *left* me. You don't get that right anymore."

The silence in the room was almost suffocating and for once there was no snark or grin on the queen's face.

She looked almost somber, her brows pinched together in consideration, her hands folded in her lap and her head tilted just so as she watched him. He didn't know what she was looking for, didn't know how long they had to stand there staring before one of them gave in. But he knew it wasn't going to be him.

After his growls had subsided to gentle rumbles, Mitsuki sighed and bobbed her head.

"I know this must be hard for you," she began, all teasing and jovial tones missing from her voice now. "I know you don't understand why it was necessary. I won't insult you by saying it was a difficult decision, because it wasn't. I made it easily. I will say that I'm sorry," she said, and even through the anger thrumming through him, Katsuki was surprised to hear the truth in the statement. "I'm sorry for what you've had to go through, but I will not apologize for doing it."

Shock ricocheted through him like a ping pong ball, bouncing off his ribs before lodging itself in his heart at those words.

"I'll never apologize for leaving you there, Katsuki," she continued, raising her chin with all the defiance and grace of a queen on a throne. "If I'd have brought you here, you would have died the moment we passed through the gates. I wasn't as powerful back then as I am now. I could have tried to protect you and I would have failed. If, on the impossible chance that you survived, you'd have been an outcast," she told him with a frown. "You'd have been hated and

mistreated by the entire clan, your entire life. Your position in birth would have done you no favors as you'd not earned the respect of the clan. You wouldn't have been given the chance to earn it in the first place." Katsuki opened his mouth to argue, to tell her that she didn't *know* that, but she held up a hand to stop him. "Trust me, Katsuki. Being what you are, you wouldn't have thrived here. Not like you did in the Sekai. Just look around you."

Katsuki tensed, but he took a careful step back into line with his pack, refusing to look away from the queen. When he didn't say anything, or do as she asked, the woman sighed.

"You've come here for a bonding ceremony," she told him, as if he didn't already know that. "You, a hybrid child- half human and half yokai- have come into a realm that is not your own, with a pack made up of humans and another hybrid, for a ceremony that'd you'd never have been allowed to participate in had you stayed here. You, who have managed what no hybrid Kitsune has done before, and grown a new tail. You, who have mates to stand beside you and a pack at your back." Her voice never wavered as she spoke to him, but if he looked closely enough, Katsuki was sure there was something almost fond in her eyes, something proud and motherly. "You've *thrived* in the Sekai. You've created a home for yourself, you've grown stronger than you *ever* could have here. And I will not apologize for that."

Scoffing, Katsuki raised an eyebrow and crossed his arms over his chest. "What, am I supposed to thank you for abandoning me and making me into this?"

A sharp laugh escaped the woman again and she snorted as she waved her hand at him. "Fuck no! I had nothing to do with this, kid. You did this all on your own. *You* did. I'm just saying that you can be pissed at me all you want. You can hate me and curse my name or whatever it is you want to do, but I will always stand by my decision."

And… Katsuki believed her. He believed that she thought it had been the right choice, he believed her when she said he'd have died otherwise. Hell, how many people had told him that he was lucky to have made it past infancy? Part of him wanted to argue, to tell her that he was strong and he would have thrived anywhere. But the logical side of him told him that wasn't true. He was strong because of the people around him. He was strong because he had *learned* to be. And if Mitsuki was right, he never would have learned that by staying in the Ikai.

“Now, are you going to sit down so we can eat? Or would you like to keep arguing about your abandonment issues and how terrible of a mother I am?” When he only glared at her, she laughed and waved at the tables before them. “Go on! Sit! I want to know more about this pack you’ve created and your little mates. When Shouta told me you’d gone and built yourself this little group, I was absolutely shocked. You all must be very strong if you’ve decided to stick around.”

Katsuki snorted and rolled his eyes, dropping down onto his cushion as gracefully as Mitsuki had earlier. That is to say, not gracefully at all. “I wouldn’t have chosen them if they weren’t strong.”

“Aww, Kaachan! We knew you cared!” Kaminari crooned from the other side of Shinsou, his bright grin helping relieve some of the tension still in the air.

“Yeah and I distinctly remember us having to bully you into friendship,” Mina argued from the other end of the room, pointing a finger at him. “*You* were all broody mc-brooder. Groaning about how you didn’t *need* friends because you had Izuku and Shouto.”

The others bobbed their heads and Katsuki could feel the blood rushing to his cheeks at the amused look on his mother’s face, the disgusted look on his… sisters? Face, and the smirk on Aizawa’s. “I-don’t be fuckin’ stupid!”

But Kirishima, the traitor, bobbed his head eagerly and laughed. “Seriously dude! I don’t think you even knew our names until USJ! Which, come to think of it is when you got your second tail right?” He gasped, leaning over Izuku eagerly and pointing at Katsuki. “Oh em gee, bro! Did you gain a new tail because you *admitted to yourself that you had friends*?” Katsuki’s sputtering must have been answer enough because his red-haired best friend grinned so wide the blonde was sure his face would split in half. “Dude! That’s so manly, holy crap! You got stronger through the sheer power of friendship!”

“Shut the fuck up, shark teeth before I blow you to smitherines!”

“Bro! Not manly!”

“Kaachan, please calm down.”

Mitsuki raised an eyebrow, glancing down at the cat beside her with a fond looking smile. “Are they always like this?”

Aizawa sighed and rubbed at one of his eyes. “Unfortunately yes.

They’re a handful but-“ he turned his tired eyes towards the roudy bunch- though admittedly they were more subdued that normal, most likely due to their company. “He’s made a good family for himself,” the teacher finished quietly. “They’re strong and they’re protective of each other. Each and every one of them.”

Mitsuki smiled. “I’m glad.”

Chapter 29: A Challenge

Chapter Summary

Things get steamy. Figuratively and Literally.

Chapter Notes

Oh my gosh my upload schedule has absolutely disappeared! I'm so sorry you guys! I'm trying to get back on track, I promise! For your patience, I've added a bit of a treat somewhere in the middle of this chapter! Please enjoy!

Small warning, the boys get a little steamy in the first scene. If that bothers you, feel free to skip over it. It doesn't get too explicit or anything, but like, figured I'd warn you just in case.

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“This is stupid.”

“I don’t think Mr. Aizawa had a choice, Kaachan…”

“This is dumb as fuck and I cannot believe she’s making us do this.”

Izuku sighed from where he stood next to the blonde. The dinner with the queen- Katsuki’s *mother*- had gone surprisingly well. She had a lot of questions about how things had changed since she’d been there, touched briefly on some of their quirks (though not all of them), and asked Izuku plenty of questions on how his mother was doing. Truthfully, as nervous as Izuku had been the whole time, it all went rather smoothly.

Or at least, it had until the queen announced the party. A ‘celebration of the prince’s return’ she’d called it when Mr. Aizawa had tried to argue with her. Apparently their teacher had been told this was a simple trip for just the bonding, no parties necessary, but the queen had deemed otherwise.

“*It’s important to show the people, the clan, how much he’s grown*,” she’d said with an air of pride. *“Not to mention the fact that the clan is already questioning my decisions in bonding a pack of humans and hybrids. A festival will go to show them how strong this pack is and that they deserve*

this bonding just as much as the next pack."

And Izuku couldn't exactly argue against that logic, because it was probably true. He was grateful for the consideration on her part, though he wondered how much of it was simply because she loved the chaos of a last minute party, loved the annoyed look her decision had put on Aizawa and Kaachan's respective faces.

And the party was nice. They'd spent the night in their given room, only to wake up to the festivities in full bloom. A massive courtyard had been set up with bright decorations and tables and tables of food and drinks. All kinds of creatures were roaming about the space, some in their full yokai forms, though most seemed to favor a more human look for the occasion. Izuku wondered if it was just a general preference, or if it was for their benefit and comfort. He hadn't quite decided yet.

The other pack members were scattered around the courtyard, all well within visual range of where Katsuki was sulking in one of the corners and where Mr. Aizawa stood lazily beside the queen. They were still in groups, with Mina, Kiri, and Hatsume animatedly speaking with some Kitsune women, and Shinsou, Kaminari and Sero off at one of the food tables speaking to someone with a cat tail.

Izuku and Shouto however remained loyally at Katsuki's side. Partially because neither were nearly as comfortable in crowds as the others were, but mostly because Katsuki got all growly anytime they got further than five feet away from him.

Long story short, the blonde didn't seem to be enjoying the party at all.

"Think we'd get in trouble if we just… book it back to the room and hide out there until all this shit is over with?" The blonde questioned with a raised brow.

Shouto blinked at them for a moment before shrugging and Izuku sighed. "Kaachan- that's very rude! This party is technically for you. Plus, Mr. Aizawa said to stay together and we can't just abandon everyone else here on their own," he argued, though even Izuku could admit how nice it sounded to get away from the loudness of the crowds around them. Still… "We need to be careful here, Kaachan. We don't know their customs and just leaving in the middle of a celebration might be considered extremely rude, or offensive or- or… I don't know! But- Kaachan!"

The name devolved into a squeak as the blonde wrapped his hands around Izuku's waist and tugged him closer, Izuku's back pressed up against Katsuki's chest. His nose rubbed the spot behind the greenette's ear and the other boy struggled not to melt into the embrace, fighting back his blush as he desperately looked around the courtyard to see if anyone noticed them. If they had, he couldn't tell, but he bit his lip to hold back a moan when a pair of sharp teeth dragged across his throat.

"Come on, Izu… with everything that's been going on, we've barely had any time to relax together. And you know I fucking hate this. I just want to spend time with you two."

The smaller boy scoffed, though his eyes fluttered slightly at the playful nip beneath his hairline. "Kaachan- we- we live together. We literally share a bed every night. You don't think-"

"Look at Shouto," the blonde interrupted, the order causing Izuku's eyes to find their third instantly. "Look at him, Izu, and tell me again that you want to stay here at the party."

And… you know… it wasn't *fair* when Katsuki used Shouto against him. Because Izuku was *weak* and Shouto was *pretty*. Especially with his wide, blown out eyes and the bright blush that traveled all the way down his throat as he watched the two of them. His long eyelashes fluttered under the new attention, his lips parted just slightly, as if he too wanted to get his mouth on Izuku's neck but was holding himself back in front of the others. And sure, Kaachan was pretty too- *really* pretty. But Izuku had grown up with him, so it was easier to ignore him than it was to ignore Shouto. Shouto was still *new* and he looked so cute when his face was flushed like that.

"We have to come back though," Izuku mumbled when he'd finally relented and let Katsuki drag him away down one of the halls towards their rooms. "We can't be gone for the whole party, Kaachan! Okay?"

The blonde grunted, and Izuku took it as an agreement because it was probably the best he was going to get right now. He knew Katsuki was stressed out being in the Ikai in the first place, and he hated parties on a normal basis. No doubt he needed the distraction.

Or at least, that's how Izuku justified it to himself when he let the blonde shove him up against the wall the second the door was shut behind them. He was barely able to suck in a breath between frantic kisses and it felt like Katsuki was physically trying to meld him into

the wall with how hard he was being pressed against it. At some point he felt his feet lift off the ground and he squeaked, shifting frantically to wrap his legs around Katsuki's waist and his arms around his neck. He wasn't surprised necessarily by the fact that the blonde could *effortlessly* lift him, but it still sent a shock of arousal through him that he hadn't expected and he was sure his face was as bright as Shouto's hair.

Shouto…

"Wait- Kaachan," he gasped, pulling away and tilting his face in the other boy's direction. "What about Shou?"

The blonde didn't seem bothered by Izuku's lips being torn away, instead delving down to his throat instead, biting and sucking gently at his pulse until Izuku was practically writhing in his arms. "IcyHot can join in whenever he wants," Katsuki grumbled, fingers gripping tight to the greenette's hips and pinning them against the wall to keep him still.

Green eyes found heterochromic and there was something almost misty in Shouto's eyes. Not in a sad way, but in the kind of way that told Izuku the boy was just as affected by all this as he was.

"I…" the dual-haired boy swallowed and blushed deeper. "I am perfectly happy watching."

And the greenette didn't doubt it. Shouto had always seemed to enjoy watching him and Katsuki make out. But right now they were all on the brink of *something* and Izuku didn't want Shouto left out of it. He reached a hand out towards the taller boy, making grabby fingers in his direction until Shouto took a few steps forward, his front pressed against Katsuki's back and sandwiching the blonde between them. With a gentle tug, Izuku kept pulling until he could kiss Shouto over Katsuki's shoulder, one hand dug deep into red hair and the other tugging at Katsuki's spikes.

Heat bubbled low in Izuku's chest as he swallowed Shouto's moan, feeling Katsuki shift between them, like he couldn't decide if he wanted to rock into Izuku or press back into Shouto.

It was all a lot. And it felt different from anything they'd done before. The quick and efficient way Katsuki untied the front of Izuku's robes was different. The deliberate way Shouto grabbed the blonde's hips and pulled him closer was different. The soft moans and heavy breathing that escaped the three of them were different… Like a shift

into something new.

Up until now the most they'd done was make out. Sometimes hands might wander a bit, but never far. It wasn't that any of them were uncomfortable with it, it was just that they hadn't felt the need to move any further, any faster.

But now, with his lips being devoured and his throat stinging with tiny bites and bruises, Izuku was kicking himself for not doing this sooner.

"Fuck," Kaachan hissed when Izuku pulled away to breath and Shouto took the opportunity to bring his own lips down to Katsuki's neck. His teeth grazed the point behind the boy's ear and Izuku could *feel* the shudder run through the blonde. Could feel the way his fingers tensed on Izuku's waist and the way his hips bucked unconsciously. Izuku took the chance to roll into the motion and Katsuki hissed again, dropping his forehead onto the greenette's shoulder. "Wait- *wait, fuck*- stop."

All three of them froze immediately, Shouto's lips staying on Katsuki's throat, but just a gentle press instead of anything more heated. Izuku unclenched his fingers, running them through Katsuki's hair instead as they all struggled to catch their breath. He wasn't sure how long they'd been at it- it felt like minutes as much as it felt like hours- but it was long enough for them all to feel the shortness of breath and the heat of their bodies.

"Kaachan?" Izuku breathed finally, leaning his head back and tugging until the blonde looked up at him. His eyes were wide and wild, pupils split in a way that Izuku had only seen when he was fully transformed, and sharp canines protruded from his kiss-swollen lips. "Are-are you okay?"

It was only after they'd all stopped moving that the other two boys noticed Katsuki was shivering between them. His fingers were bruising on Izuku's hips and the smaller boy could feel his claws almost digging into his skin despite the layers between them.

"Katsuki?"

"I'm fine- *fuck*," the blonde cursed, which did not at all alleviate Izuku's worries, but he grunted and dropped his head back on the greenette's shoulder. He took a shuttering breath and held it for a few moments before letting it out again. "If we don't stop now, I won't be able to. And I'm sure the others don't want us fucking in a room we're

all sharing. *Shit*- and- and the fox…" Izuku shivered under him as he felt Katsuki's teeth graze his skin as he spoke. "I really just want to bite down and not let go."

Which was… interesting and not at all what Izuku was expecting.

"Do you think that's a marking thing?" Shouto questioned, still not having moved from his position, but he now rested his chin on Katsuki's shoulder. His cheeks were still dusted pink and his lips were bitten and swollen in such a *pretty* way that Izuku wanted to dive in for more, but he stayed still instead. This sounded important and if Kaachan wanted to stop, then they needed to stop. "The queen mentioned something about not seeing a mark on either of us. A bite would definitely make a mark."

Another shiver wracked through Katsuki and he rumbled between them. "I don't know. It… sounds right. Feels right. But- but not now. Not here," he growled.

And Izuku nodded, patting at the spikes in front of him with a smile. "We can stop. I'm- I'm not really ready to go any further anyway. Especially not here," he blushed. "And- and Mr. Aizawa can probably smell everything that goes on in here so- um… yeah no, I'd really rather not."

That drew a snort out from Katsuki and he leaned back until his head was tilted back onto Shouto's shoulder. "Fuck… yeah I didn't even think about that. Talk about awkward."

"He'll know anyway," Shouto said quietly, a smug sort of look on his face. "They all will. You may not have bitten anyone, but you sure left enough marks."

Marks? When did-

Izuku squawked, hand flying to his throat as if he'd be able to feel the hickies that were no doubt covering the expanse of skin. "Oh my *god! Kaachan!* You didn't- tell me you didn't-" the smirk on the blonde's face told him everything he needed to know and he groaned. "Kaachan! I can't cover those up! Not here! Everyone is going to see them-" he whined, pushing the boy's chest until the blonde relented and placed him back on his feet, dodging each following blow with a loud laugh. "You absolute menace!"

"You didn't seem to mind a few minutes ago when you were moaning my name," Katsuki snorted, dodging another kick as he darted behind

Shouto, using the dual-haired boy as a human shield. "*Oh Kaachan- don't stop Kaachan! Right there, Kaachan!"*

Another indignant sound escaped Izuku's throat, heat rushing to his face as he threw a pillow in Katsuki's direction. "I do *not* sound like that! I-I- Shouchaan! Tell Katsuki to stop being mean to me!"

The human shield simply held up his hands in innocence, rolling his eyes as if it'd distract from the smile playing at his lips. "I am not getting in the middle of this. Besides, Katsuki isn't the only one giving out free marks."

Which was true because there was one dark mark sitting just below Kaachan's ear that Shouto had left. Pretty and purple against the other boy's skin.

"You bastard! I didn't even feel it!"

"I am not a bastard, my parents were married when I was born."

"You son of a-"

A sharp knock at the door drew their attention and Izuku gasped, slipping behind Shouto as he rushed to fix his robes and ties, knowing it would do no good to hide the red marks all over his neck.

A man none of them recognized stood at the door when Katsuki yanked it open. Bright orange fox ears extended from his orange hair and his impassive brown eyes passed over them all in disinterest. Izuku had no doubt the man noticed their messy states, but he deemed not to comment on it, instead turning back towards Katsuki with a low bow.

"Your highness, the queen requests your return to the festivities," he said in a low, monotone voice. "The trials are to begin upon your arrival."

"Trials?" Izuku asked, peaking around Shouto's shoulder as he finished tying the sash around his waist. "What trials?"

"It is traditional for a bonding festival," the Kitsune informed them as he straightened up. "The pack in question is to participate in a tournament to prove their worth and power to the queen and clan. This is most often seen in the form of physical battle. Each member of the pack is required to participate."

Nerves settled low in Izuku's stomach as he gripped the sleeve of Shouto's robes. "Battle? We're expected to fight?"

"Please," the man said, gesturing towards the hallway as he stepped aside. "Please follow me."

"Mitsuki, you told me we weren't going to do this," Shouta sighed from beside her, glaring out at the clearing as he watched the arena

being set up. They were placed up on a pedestal pressed up against one of the arena's edges, Hideko placed to one side and Shouta to her other. "I distinctly remember asking you to skip the traditional shit and get straight to the bonding."

Mitsuki laughed loudly, excitement bubbling inside of her as the arena was finished and the crowd began to gather around. She'd always loved a good fight, and to know that it was her son's pack that would be proving themselves made her even the more excited. She'd learned a bit about their quirks during dinner the night before, but now she'd get to see them in action and she was impatient to get it started.

"And I distinctly remember telling you that I'd do my best," she grinned, sharp and cunning, down at her second. "Besides, it's all in good fun! The little ones need to prove themselves to me, to show me that they can protect my son, and Katsuki needs to prove himself to the clan." She shrugged, accepting a drink that was passed in her direction and downing it in one go. "If you've been training them all then I've no doubt they can hold their own. Do you question your own teaching, Shouta?"

The kitten sneered at her, and shoved his hands in his pockets. "You don't give two shits about all that," he grumbled. "You're just curious and you don't care that you could get these kids seriously hurt. Or worse. They're not from this world, Mitsuki. They may know how to fight, they may have their quirks, but they don't know how we work. Katsuki is the only one who's even fought one of our kind, Hitoshi a little bit. They won't be prepared."

"Then we'll get to see how they react under pressure," Mitsuki shrugged, unbothered. "I have the utmost confidence."

"*Mistuki-*"

"Shouta," she interrupted sharply, turning her red eyes to meet his white. She watched him straighten under the tone. "I do not need to remind you that I am still your queen. I may have released you from this realm, but you are still a part of this pack and this clan. You are still *mine*." She reminded him. "I let you get away with a lot of shit because you are my closest friend, but you are treading a very thin line right now. You are not Katsuki's keeper, you denied that right when I asked it of you fifteen years ago. If I want to see them fight, then I will see them fight. That is the end of it."

And it was the end of it. Her friend didn't say anything else when the

clan quieted down and Katsuki and his pack were brought forth to stand in front of here pedestal. She dutifully ignored the flustered look of her son and his two mates, as well as the marks on their throats, though she could see he wasn't happy with being dragged back out to the festivities.

Too bad.

Some flowery words were given as per tradition for a festival arena. They were so common to her now that she barely registered she was even saying them until she came to the end, turning towards her son and his friends with a smile. "There are no rules in the arena. Feel free to use your quirks as you see fit. We have plenty of healers for any injuries either side may incur," she told them eagerly, noticing how nervous they all looked at the sudden idea of having to fight. "In fact I encourage you to use your quirks as much as you'd like, I want to see what they do. As for the challenge itself," she said, gesturing towards the others gathered around the large courtyard, "you may challenge whoever you like, or accept any challenge put forth towards you. Just know that once a challenge is accepted, you cannot back out. It must be seen through. Do you all accept the terms?"

It was cute, the way they all turned to Katsuki before answering, like his decision would matter in the scheme of things. And she supposed it did, as far as they were concerned. Like Shouta said, they didn't know the ways of the Ikai. They didn't understand that this wasn't exactly optional once she'd decided it. Still, it made a sort of pride well up in her chest at seeing her son already taking control of his own pack, at seeing how they gravitated towards him and followed him loyally.

Loyalty was a pack's strength after all.

Once Katsuki nodded, the others nodded as well and Mituski clapped her hands together with excitement.

"Lovely! Then by all means, let us get started! Who'd like to go first?"

To her surprise, Katsuki's mate- the one with the two coloured hair- raised his hand first, slow and deliberate. "I would like to get this over with," he said, shrugging when the others shot him surprised looks as well.

"I love the enthusiasm!" She laughed, waving the others to take their seats in front of her podium as the little one- Shouto she thinks he was called- took his place inside the arena. "Who will challenge my son's

mate?" Many hands raised and shouts were thrown out, but the boy did not move his gaze away from Mitsuki. "Go on then, it is your challenge. You may pick whoever you wish."

She watched as the boy nodded, turning towards the crowd around him and looking at each challenger with a narrowed, calculating gaze. He was an interesting one, a calm against Katsuki's storm, and Mitsuki was eager to see his power. Shouta had mentioned him being perhaps the strongest in his class, even above her own son, and she knew he had control over minor elements. But seeing him in action with that control would be interesting to say the least.

He chose an older Kitsune, one Mitsuki had known for most of her life and was extremely skilled in hand to hand combat but not so much in illusionary work like many of his other kin. He wasn't overly large, but tone and experienced. It was an interesting choice, one that told her the boy wasn't looking for an easy win, but a challenging one perhaps. No doubt he could tell by the way the Kitsune held himself that he was a fighter. A good fighter too considering he was not part of her armies.

"Are we doing this for entertainment?" The boy asked once the Kitsune got into the ring with him.

Mitsuki raised an eyebrow and hummed, tilting her head. "Curious question. Why do you ask?"

Shouto shrugged. "I wish to know if you are doing this to gauge our power or if you'd like this to be a show. It will affect how I go about defeating him."

Katsuki snorted below her and a grin spread over his face that had Mitsuki curious to know what he was thinking. Still, she waved at him and smirked. "Do as you wish. This will be entertaining either way. You only have to incapacitate him, knock him unconscious, or kill him. Doesn't matter to me." They widened their eyes at her last words but she ignored them and turned towards her son with a smirk. "Katsuki, any words for your beloved before we begin? It's tradition to give him your favor."

"*Tsk*, how about we not use dumb words like *beloved*," he spat, much to her amusement, but still he stood and stepped up to the edge of the arena, gesturing the other boy towards him. When he got within range, Katsuki grabbed him by the back of the neck and tugged him into a hard kiss, drawing a shocked grunt from the dual-haired boy.

“Sports festival, one on one with tape head,” he said with a smirk as he pulled away, and though the words meant nothing to Mitsuki, they seemed to mean something to the other boy.

Shouto raised an eyebrow at him and frowned. “I would have thought you’d want me to show off,” he said in return. “Put on a show.”

“I want you to show them not to underestimate us,” Katsuki corrected him. “Show them how easily you can take them out if they decide to threaten us.” And with that he dropped back down onto his cushion and smirked. The green one- Inko’s little bunny- gave the boy a thumbs up and Shouto nodded.

Shouto faced Mitsuki with a blank face, his back completely turned to the Kitsune behind him. It was foolish, especially considering the fact that she’d specified that there were no rules to this game. The other could attack at any given moment and the boy would be none the wiser. Yet still, he didn’t seem bothered by turning his back to his enemy. Instead, he stared at her as if waiting for a sign to begin.

Well if it’s what he wanted-

She bobbed her head and waved a hand. “You may begin-“

No sooner had the words escaped her lips was the boy twisting around, one foot planted sturdy on the ground and the other sliding effortlessly to the side in a circle until he was facing his opponent. Within seconds a sheet of ice spread out from his foot and rocketed towards the other end of the arena, completely consuming the Kitsune until only his face was visible from within the ice.

Mitsuki could have blinked and missed it if she hadn’t been watching with rapt attention.

It took only a breath of time and the boy had won the match.

He turned back towards the dais, barely any emotion his face as his mis-matched eyes turned to Mitsuki. “Does that count as incapacitating, your majesty?

“Well shit,” she breathed, the words slipping through on the back of a cackle. “Holy shit, Shouta! You weren’t kidding when you said this kid was a powerhouse!” She scoffed, smacking her friend on the shoulder and snorting again at the small smirk he hid in his scarf.

The boy in question blushed slightly and Katsuki rolled his eyes at

him. “I thought you weren’t going to show off,” he called out as the boy stepped up to the mountain of ice and placed a hand on it. Instantly the courtyard began to fill with steam as the ice began to melt. “You could have done the same thing without the spin.”

There was an almost playful look in Shouto’s eyes as he glanced over his shoulder at her son, but he shrugged. “That would have been boring.”

Mitsuki couldn’t help but laugh again.

Her son had chosen well. She knew this already if Shouta’s praises were to be believed, but seeing it for herself was another matter. Watching the others fight proved even more so that he had surrounded himself with powerful and loyal friends. Family. They weren’t all as strong as the first boy, but they could hold their own against many of her strong fighters. The boy with rocks for skin had asked for the strongest hand-to-hand combatant they had and asked him not to go easy on him. The fight was extremely interesting to watch, especially as the boy won with a solid punch to the nose, and Mitsuki figured he was probably Katsuki’s other powerhouse in the group.

A few of the others were clearly not as trained in physical combat as the first two. The pink girl relied heavily on her acid quirk and evasion, but she managed perfectly well in her fight. The other pink one, who stuck rather close to little Izuku, was another who seemed not to be as knowledgable in combat as the others. Perhaps the least so in fact. She was confident and sturdy, no doubt with some training, but it was clear that it wasn’t her strongest trait. Still, she held her own fairly well even if she did end up losing in the end. One boy was able to create a sort of binding from his elbows that Shouta explained was called tape or adhesive. It made quick work of his opponent, subduing her immediately, but he’d ultimately lost thanks to underestimating her illusion and teleportation magic. (In his defense, Naomi had been the first prime caster that was challenged, so he hadn’t at all been prepared.)

The lightning boy was interesting. His quirk was unpredictable, difficult to control. That much was clear. He’d chosen to go up against another one of her casters, but this time with the knowledge of who he’d chosen. For a while she was sure he’d lose. He was cocky, excitable. He moved too much and talked too much. But it was clear that in the end those traits all worked to his advantage. It made his enemy cocky as well, made his opponent believe he wasn’t as smart or

powerful as the rest of the pack.

That was their downfall.

Unfortunately for the boy, expending his quirk to such an extent seemed to put him in a bit of a dull state afterwards. So Mitsuki had decided it a tie considering the boy wasn't necessarily conscious enough to consider it a full win.

And then there were three. The little Satori. Inko's bunny. And Katsuki.

The bunny stood first, his green eyes watching Katsuki for a long moment before he took a deep breath and stepped into the arena. Mitsuki smiled at him and waited for him to choose one of the many people around them that were offering up a challenge. To her amusement though, his eyes never left hers.

"Well?" She asked, spreading her hands out in front of her. "Who do you choose?"

The boy bit his lip, considering. Thinking. Observing. "I can choose anyone here?"

Mitsuki nodded. "Anyone you like."

Izuku nodded, taking a deep breath and straightening his back. "Then I choose you, Your Majesty."

Chapter End Notes

Hi everyone! I have ART FOR YOU!
First off, I got bored and did some doodling because someone asked for pictures of Katsuki's fox form. So here you go! I do plan on drawing his big fox eventually, but I haven't had time yet!
https://twitter.com/GoblinTrashArt/status/1345950747419172865?s=19
ALSO THE LOVELY WANDERINGCLOUD DREW FANART FOR THIS STORY AND I LITERALLY DIED WITH HOW AMAZING IT IS. PLEASE CHECK THEM OUT! @pocketrabi on twitter
https://twitter.com/PocketRabi/status/1344269938815606784?s=19

Also check me out on twitter and tumbler @midnighttrashgoblin

or @goblintrashart because I post art and stuff and some of it is related to this fanfic. :D

Love you all! Thanks for reading!

Chapter 30: Unabashedly

Chapter Summary

Izuku makes a point. An old friend makes an appearance.

Chapter Notes

Back on my bullshit. Woohoo! Two uploads in as many days. Merry late Christmas. I'm trying to get back on my frantic uploading, but I make no promises. Hope you enjoy this chapter!

SIDE NOTE: You guys are CRAZY. Reading everyone's reactions to yesterdays chapter had be *rolling* and I loved it. Man, it was great. You guys are great and I love you all!

Mini Trigger Warning: There is some violence in this chapter but it doesn't get too graphic.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The silence around the arena was almost suffocating as Izuku waited for an answer, having apparently even surprised the queen. She blinked down at him with wide, red eyes and Izuku had to force himself not to shudder at the sheer power they held.

It hadn't been a last minute decision, challenging the queen. He'd been thinking about it since Shouto first stepped into the arena. Weighing the pros and cons, thinking up strategies and possible outcomes.

He could admit it was a stupid move, objectively. He knew almost nothing about the culture here, knew nothing of the queen's own abilities. Not to mention the fact that she had *five tails* and so far the only Kitsune that any of them had fought had a maximum of three.

Still, Izuku stood by his choice, straightening his shoulders and raising his chin as she scrutinized him. There was a purpose behind the challenge and he meant to see it through.

"What the *fuck*, Izuku?!"

Unfortunately, there was no accounting for Kaachan's anger.

The blonde was already on his feet, his face twisted in anger as he

made his way towards Izuku, only to be stopped by Aizawa's hand on his shoulder. "The challenge has not been accepted yet," their teacher frowned, eyes finding Izuku and narrowing, as if he too was trying to figure out just what the boy was up to. "You cannot enter the arena when there's a challenge on the floor."

"The fuck I can't! Let me go! I'll beat the sense into him," Katsuki growled, struggling against the grip and ultimately failing.

Izuku kept his eyes on the queen however, refusing to cower under her gaze. "Do you accept the challenge, your majesty?"

Mitsuki hummed, leaning her chin onto her palm. Izuku could tell she was trying to pick him apart, trying to determine what his objective was. She was also no doubt trying to remember if they'd discussed his quirk or not yet. They hadn't, Izuku had been very careful to avoid the topic until now, having suspected something of this kind would happen sooner or later.

And Izuku had something to prove.

"You'll lose, little bunny rabbit," the queen told him.

Izuku only shrugged. "I know."

That silence fell over them again, but Izuku was patient. He could wait. This was too important to throw away, to mess up. The others had their chance to prove themselves and Izuku needed his. He *needed* it, perhaps more so than the others.

A blink later and the woman was in front of him, standing on the other end of the arena with a smirk. "Very well, I accept. I'm interested to see what you have to offer," she told him. After a moment, she waved towards the commotion at the base of the dais and chuckled. "Go calm down your kit. Take his favor. We begin when you're ready."

"What the *hell* are you playing at you idiot?" Katsuki all but screamed as soon as Izuku was close enough for the blonde to grab him by the front of his robes and pull him close. "You don't have any of your shit with you, she's got fucking *magick* on her side, and- oh yeah, she's the *fucking* queen," his boyfriend spat, shaking Izuku with the last word as if it'd shake sense into him. "You're going to get yourself fucking killed."

Aizawa sighed from beside them, finally letting go of Katsuki to glare

at Izuku. “I’m going to have to agree with him on this, Izuku. This was not a smart decision. You won’t win this fight.”

Izuku gave them a smile, trying to push as much confidence into it as he could. “Good thing I don’t plan on winning then,” he shrugged, shocking his boyfriend enough to pull out of his grasp. “Besides, I don’t think she’d kill me. Mr. Aizawa trusts her. I think if she would kill me, he’d be putting up more of a fight to stop this.” He glanced at his teacher for confirmation before receiving a shrug in return. With a deep breath, Izuku turned back to Katsuki and tried to give him his best smile. “Come on, Kaachan. Have a little faith. I know what I’m doing, I promise.”

“You’re going to get hurt,” the blonde mumbled as he pulled Izuku in closer again, resting their foreheads together.

“I know, but I’ll be okay, I promise.” He leaned forward and pressed a kiss to Katsuki’s scowling lips and smiled. “Trust me?” he asked, receiving a grumble and nod in return before he turned towards their teacher. “Any advice? I’ll take whatever I can get.”

The dark haired man frowned and glanced behind the greenette towards the queen, considering something before sighing. “Just keep your eye on her. *Watch* her the whole time, don’t take your eyes off of her.”

Izuku took the words to heart as he leaned over for a good luck kiss from Shouto as well before turning to face the arena again. He wasn’t sure just how Aizawa’s words would come into play, but he knew better than to dismiss them entirely. The older man never said anything without purpose. It wasn’t logical.

Mitsuki was on the other end of the arena, still wearing her thick layers of robes, her five tails flicking through the air behind her. She was watching him in amusement, and Izuku had a brief moment to wonder if she would underestimate him or not.

“I’m ready.”

The short boy took a deep breath, holding it for a few seconds before releasing it and dropping into a crouch. He kept himself on the balls of his bare feet, his muscles coiled and ready to move but still lose enough not to be tense. His eyes were trained on the queen, on her relaxed posture and her smug grin, on every minute shift of her fabrics and tails, every blink and movement. He couldn’t see her hands with the way they were hidden within the sleeves of her robes, and that

more than anything made him nervous.

He hadn't seen it, but he knew from what Auntie Hinko had told them that Mitsuki had casting abilities. She was a good fighter, but her expertise had always lied with her spells, her illusions. The priestess had mentioned the illusion work often in the beginning, preparing Katsuki on the chance that he'd gain the same abilities only to be surprised when he didn't. Not yet at least.

And granted, Izuku didn't know *how* she casted. It was very possible she didn't cast with her hands at all. But he would much rather have been able to see them just in case. You could tell a lot about people by their hands, and Izuku knew almost nothing about the queen.

The air shifted behind him and Izuku reacted without thinking, ducking to the side just in time to dodge the hand that reached for him from behind. He grabbed at the thin wrist and planted his feet, rolling his shoulders until he could feel the pull of the body behind him. He shifted to flip them over him but as soon as he did, the solid form between his fingers dissolved into nothing but smoke and vapor. An illusion.

Interesting. Solid enough to attack, but the ability to be intangible. Upon contact? Or by will?

"Tell me little one," Mitsuki called from across the stage, having not moved an inch since the match began. "I know nearly everyone's quirk by now except yours and the Satori's. Indulge an old woman and tell me?" Izuku kept his mouth shut as he concentrated. If he was dealing with illusions, then Aizawa's advice was correct. He couldn't drag his attention away from the queen. The problem was, he had to focus all the rest of his senses into overdrive. "Perhaps a mental quirk," she theorized, watching him as he dodged another illusion, this time coming from the side. His leg kicked out expertly only to be met with mist. "Or an intelligence one maybe? That'd be a bit disappointing but still admirable I suppose. Mental quirks don't work on our kind, so you'd be out of luck in that regard."

Izuku filed that information away for later, instead focusing on defense.

Dodging Mitsuki's illusions was very similar to fighting Katsuki in certain ways. Sometimes they'd train with the Kitsune aspects more than the quirk aspects of the blonde, and he relied heavily on his vanishing ability during those fights. It'd taught Izuku early on to pay

attention to the changes in the air, the images in the corners of his eyes, the sounds and scents around him in order to predict where the boy would appear next.

Fighting illusions was kind of like that.

Unfortunately it only took one wrong move for everything to turn on its head.

Because Mitsuki was smart, and Izuku knew up until this point she'd just been playing with him. Hell, she probably still was. But the illusion that appeared directly in front of her, launching itself at Izuku head on, surprised him more than it logically should have.

It also broke his line of sight.

He'd barely managed to dodge the image, the raking of claws across his ribs telling him that he didn't move fast enough, before he looked back up towards the queen. Only she wasn't alone. There were at least five of her now, circling Izuku completely and one hundred percent, perfectly identical to each other. He cursed himself for falling for the distraction, trying not to wince at the pain in his side as he took in the images around him.

He had to find the real one. *But which is it?*

"You had to have a reason," one of the queens said before launching herself at him. Izuku grunted as he tossed his arms up to block a blow. He ducked, swerved, twisted. Anything he could do to avoid the dangerous claws that were aiming for him. He landed a solid kick to the side of her face, sending her stumbling to one side and dissolving into nothing. *Another illusion*. "Not many have the balls to challenge the queen," she continued, this time from behind him. "What could have possibly been going through your mind when you made this decision?"

Izuku could barely breathe as he struggled to keep up with the barrage of attacks. Either he'd land a hit and the image would vanish, or she'd land a hit and Izuku was rocked with a spike of pain. Still, he was learning with every move. Every word she spoke. Every scrape of claws and bruising grip.

This is what he did.

He observed. He watched. He analyzed.

And Mitsuki was a fascinating subject. She was probably the most powerful person he'd fought in terms of experience. Aizawa was maybe up there, but he'd never seen the other man use his yokai magick so Izuku didn't quite count it. Still, it was the fact that he was still learning something about her that made all the pain and injuries worth it.

Because there was something nagging at the back of his mind with the illusions. There was something *right there* that he was reaching for, grasping at. Something his brain was trying to tell him. Some sort of weakness, some sort of sign.

There.

Izuku was moving before he had even fully registered what it was he'd seen. He didn't have time to dally, didn't have time to question himself.

He launched himself forward at one of the images of the queen, ducked low to avoid the others and twisting around a grasping hand. When he'd finally gotten close enough to her, he twisted himself into the air, one leg kicked out to connect with her head only to slip right through it like smoke. *Perfect*. Without missing a beat, Izuku dropped himself onto his hands, using the momentum of gravity to push himself back into the air and in the direction of the next Mitsuki in line. There was a brief moment where her eyes widened before she dipped backwards, her back arching almost elegantly to avoid the kick and Izuku went right over her. She reached for his ankle but he was already moving.

Hand to hand combat was clearly not her strong suit. She was good at it, Izuku could tell that in the way she moved. She was clearly trained, most likely from a young age, but it was clear to him that she relied much more on her magic than her fists. Her robes slowed her down a bit too, and while she didn't stumble necessarily, he could tell her steps were very deliberate when she moved to dodge his attacks.

He didn't let up. He couldn't. Not when he finally had somewhat of an upper hand. He even managed to land a few blows to the woman's arms, ribs, and back. They weren't hard blows, and would have been much more painful if he had literally any of his support items with him, but they still drove home his point.

He wasn't to be underestimated.

"Little bunny has kicks," Mitsuki laughed as she dodged another

attack towards her face. This time however, she managed to wrap her long, dangerous fingers around Izuku's ankle, tugging him back and throwing off his trajectory. Before he could struggle against the hold, Mitsuki had him on his stomach, pressed hard against the arena's floor with her claws digging into his leg and holding him down. Her other hand grabbed his arm, yanking it behind his back hard enough for the joint to pop and crack, pulling a loud cry out of the greenette as the pain seared through him like Shouto's flames. "You did very well, little one. Do you yield?"

Distantly, Izuku could hear Katsuki screaming at him from the other side of the arena, could hear Aizawa trying to calm him down. He could feel the dip in temperature as Shouto no doubt grew anxious at the scene, and he knew the others were probably on their feet, ready to fight if the need arose.

But Izuku wasn't worried. Sure, he was in a lot of pain. A *lot*. But this is exactly what he'd wanted.

You did very well, little one.

"I yield," he nodded, releasing a breath he hadn't realized he'd been holding once Mitsuki got off of him.

The moment she stepped back, there were hands on him, tugging and pressing and rolling until he was facing the sky. Katsuki was leaned over him, his face twisted with anger and worry, and Shouto was at his side, pressing a cloth into the largest wound on Izuku's side.

"You fucking idiot," Katsuki growled low in his throat. "I told you that you wouldn't win."

Which was true, but Izuku couldn't help but smile. "I didn't expect to, that wasn't the point of it all," he admitted, going to shrug his shoulders only to groan at the pain in the dislocated one.

"Tell me then," Mitsuki chimed in, ignoring the way Katsuki tensed at her voice. She hadn't left the arena yet, instead standing just slightly behind them all as she watched with curiosity and amusement. "If you knew you were going to lose, then what was the point in trying? What were you trying to prove?" She questioned, head tilting slightly in consideration. "I know you aren't stupid. I can see that plain as day. This was your plan all along, and it seemed to have worked to your satisfaction. You got what you wanted. The question is, what was it?"

Izuku groaned as Katsuki helped him into a seated position, his back

pressed up against his boyfriend's front. Someone from the crowd stepped forward carefully as they moved, ignoring Katsuki's growls, and gently took Shouto's place. Their hand glowed a soft purple and Izuku watched with mind wonder as the wounds on his side began to stitch themselves closed.

The queen cleared her throat and Izuku jumped slightly. "Oh! Right-um. Well I just wanted to prove that I could do it," he said, all confidence from early gone now under her scrutiny, his nerves flaring at being confronted about his plan. "From what I can tell, strength and ability are very important to your kind, especially when it comes to a pack. You've said plenty of times since we've been here that we need to be strong enough to protect your son. That was the whole point of these trials, wasn't it?" He clarified, only earning him a raised eyebrow from the queen. "Honestly, I could have challenged anyone and proved the same point," he admitted, grunting as his shoulder was popped back into place.

He let Katsuki pull him up and onto his feet, his body still weak from the healing and a certain soreness still echoing through him. He leaned heavily on the angry blonde at his side as Mitsuki considered him.

"Then why chose me?"

"Because I didn't need *them* to understand," Izuku told her with a weak shrug. "I needed *you* to understand." He gestured to his friends on the sidelines and frowned. "It's obvious that they have means of protection. It's obvious that they can hold their own in a fight. And while they all know I can fight just as well, *you* didn't know that. I had to show you that I could protect Katsuki too. That I could fight for him and I wouldn't give up even if it was his mother I had to fight against."

Mitsuki hummed and Izuku got the impression that he was being picked apart from the inside out. Like she was trying to see something else there but he wasn't quite sure what.

"You saw through my illusions," she said finally, head ticked curiously to the side. "Some Yokai have managed to do so, but never a human. Tell me how you did it."

Katsuki tensed at the order, but Izuku wasn't bothered. He just smirked and gestured to her. "It was your face," he said. "The illusions were amazing. Perfectly realistic in every way and the fact that you

could keep them solid and make them move on their own was incredible, but it was the still ones that finally tipped me off." She raised an eyebrow in question and Izuku continued, his confidence returning when he was able to fall back on the analysis part of his brain. "When they attacked, they would move on their own. Which meant it wasn't a mirror image. *You* didn't have to move in order for the illusions to move. However, when they were standing still, there was a delay."

"A delay?"

The greenette nodded and shifted on his feet, struggling to remain fully upright and eternally grateful for Katsuki's arm holding him up. "Your expressions would change just a second before the still copies would. Like an echo. I barely noticed it, but it was enough for me to figure out which one was the real one and which ones were illusions."

"Fascinating," Mitsuki grinned, seemingly satisfied with the answer. "So I was right then. It was an intelligence quirk, that's why you didn't appear to use anything during the fight. That's quite impressive."

Katsuki snorted at his side and Izuku couldn't help the smug sort of smile that grew on his own face.

Because *this* is what he'd wanted. *This*. He'd wanted her to acknowledge that he was strong without any outside assistance. Wanted her to see him as he was first before knowing the truth behind the matter. Because there had been a tiny piece of him when they'd arrived, when he'd learned how pack dynamics worked here, that was worried she wouldn't approve of him. Worried that she'd see him as weak or incapable because he didn't have magick or a quirk.

That's why he chose the queen. *That's* why he had to prove himself to her.

"Actually, your majesty, you were wrong," he said almost apologetically. "I don't have a quirk at all. I'm just me."

Mitsuki blinked at him in surprise, her grin having fallen from her face and her lips parted in a small 'o'. "You fought me on your own. With nothing but your own abilities," she muttered, and it wasn't a question or an accusation, but more of her confirming whatever thoughts were now racing through her head. And then something new settled in her eyes, something akin to pride and acceptance with a hint of something fond in those deep red orbs.

She took a step closer to them and Izuku could feel Katsuki tense beside him, but neither moved as the woman brought her hands up to Izuku's face, framing his cheeks in her palms. She gave him a gentle smile, something soft and kind. It looked almost foreign on her face, especially considering they'd only ever seen her brash and loud so far.

"You are pure, unabashedly human."

Weeks Ago – After the Sports Festival

"I thought I told you never to return, Momoko. In fact, I am sure I threatened you with death if I ever saw your face again."

The dark skinned man on the throne was an imposing one. Large and dangerous, with furs and leathers covering his bulging muscles. His dark, dark hair was braided and tangled and wild around his face, falling around his shoulders like a mane of fire. A beautiful woman sat on the top of his throne, her bare legs tossed over his shoulder and her own matted hair a pale gold against her darkened skin.

Together they sent shivers down Momoko's spine, their vicious emerald eyes watching her like a primal cat to its meal. Without hesitation, she dropped down to her knees, her forehead pressed hard against the tatami below her and her two tails tucked between her legs. She could feel the frightened tremors wracking through her body, but she was careful to keep her head as steady as she could as she spoke, keeping her eyes and head down.

"M-majesty…" she paused, clearing her throat before trying again. "Majesty, please forgive my disregard for your wishes. I would not have done so if I did not believe the reason to be of the utmost importance."

The king hummed, sharp nails tapping loudly on the arm of the throne. "And you think your reason is stronger than my word?"

"N-no, your majesty!" The nekomata rushed to assure him, shaking her head frantically. "I apologize. I have come into information that I thought it impertinent that you hear. Please, at least allow me to live long enough to deliver it. You may do as you wish after."

"I may do as I wish now," the man growled, the sound low and vicious in his throat, only stopping when a thin hand was placed on his shoulder.

The queen smiled sweetly at him, fingers tracing lazily up his throat and around his pointed ear as she hummed. “Now, now, my dear. Let the little kitten speak. Perhaps they’re telling the truth and it’s something we should know. If not, then you’ll have all the more reason to have your fun with her.”

Fun, Monoko thought harshly. Like anything they could possibly have in mind for her would be considered fun.

Still, the king grunted and waved a hand, bidding her to go on and Momoko took that as her cue to rise up slightly. She stayed on her knees, her hands clenched in her lap and her eyes downcast as she spoke. She tried to ignore the panic and anxiety building in her stomach as she thought back to what had happened earlier that day.

“Your majesties, since my banishment from the Ikai, I have been spending my days in the Sekai amongst the humans,” she began, her voice hesitant and unsure. The images of her lover, bloodied and dead in front of her, was still etched into the back of her eyelids, the scent of his death heavy in her nose. It made her want to gag around her words, and she had to take a deep breath to steady herself. “A few weeks ago a companion and I caught the scent of a hybrid, a Kitsune hybrid, in one of the cities nearby.”

The queen in front of her leaned forward slightly in interest, her hand tightening on the king’s shoulder to hold herself up. “A hybrid? It’s been quite a while since one of those has been seen. There had been rumors,” she hummed, her voice like honey and acid all at once. “But nothing confirmed as of yet.”

Momoko bobbed her head quickly. “Yes! Ah- yes, your majesty. The rumors began after Queen Mitsuki’s king was killed. Rumors of a bastard in the Sekai. It’s said he was a hybrid but everyone knows they barely live long enough to matter,” she continued, a shiver running through her at the memory of those eyes burning into her. “Well- we were hungry you see, so we tracked the hybrid down. We found them at a school for children, barely of age-“

“*Them*?” The king growled, fingers clenching around his throne as he leaned forward slightly.

“There were two of them, my king!” Momoko rushed to tell him. “There was a satori hybrid as well as a Kitsune. Both of them much older than I’ve ever seen a hybrid grow. We-we fought them. I didn’t know at the time who the Kitsune was, not until I saw him. Smelt him.

I'd recognize his aura anywhere," she stuttered, fingers clenching tight in her robes. "He was- it's Mitsuki's son, your majesty. I'm sure of it."

The silence in the throne room was deafening and Momoko struggled not to flinch at any tiny sound that found her ears.

Even the queen was tensed now, her body leaning forward so far that Momoko was sure she would fall at the slightest of breezes. "*Mitsuki*'s hybrid bastard is alive? And he's grown? What does that mean for us? I knew there were rumors," she addressed the king, fingers so tight on his shoulder that her claws dug in and drew blood. He didn't seem to care. "Rumors that he wasn't actually a bastard, rumors that the king died because he threatened the boy. I never thought there was any substance to them. Hybrids never live that long, and now there's two of them?"

"And he's strong," Momoko said carefully, her breath hitching at the memory of the black fox ripping her mate's throat out in barely seconds. "He killed my mate without a second of hesitation. I-I barely got out alive, and I think he only let me live so I could- so I could tell the queen of his existence."

The king growled, turning sharp green eyes on Momoko so quickly she jumped at the motion. "And did you?"

"No! No, your majesty! I came straight to you!" She assured him, her entire body shaking in fear. "If the rumors are true, then the boy isn't a bastard. He's the true heir to Mitsuki's throne."

"He's still a hybrid," the king spat, leaning back heavy in his chair and bringing one hand around to grab at his queen's thigh, holding onto her in a deathly grip. "He could never be strong enough to rule that clan, much less to defeat us. Our plans have not changed. Mitsuki is down a mate and now is the perfect time to claim what is ours."

The cat bit her lip, knowing she shouldn't interrupt but- "My king… he has two tails."

"Hybrids cannot grow extra tails," the queen corrected, her voice almost soothing, like a mother gently scolding a child for being an idiot. "Kitsune hybrids get one and one only."

But Momoko was already shaking her head. They had to see, they had to believe her. "Please, your majesties… I saw them for myself. He had two tails! And he was large, much larger than my mate," she knew she sounded frantic, sounded rude and improper in front of

royalty, but she couldn't care now. They'd kill her either way, at least this way they'd know. "He had his own fire and his fur-" another shock of fear wrecked through her and she gasped. "His fur was black as the night, with flames of orange and red throughout. It was- it was terrifying."

"Black fur," the king said, though the nekomata knew the question wasn't directed at her. The man turned to his queen, jaw clenched and fingers tightening to an almost bruising grip on her thigh. "The gods have blessed *her* with a kiko? A *hybrid kiko* at that?"

The queen *tsked* as she ran her fingers over her king's hair, though Momoko could feel the anger radiating off of her from the other side of the room. "Now, now, my dear. Perhaps the little cat is lying. We do not know for sure. A kiko has not been born for millennia, and to bless a hybrid? It feels so unlikely. And to hear this rumor so soon after the king's death? It seems quite suspicious, does it not?"

"Please!" Momoko cried, her eyes widening as she looked up at the couple on the throne. "Please, I'm not lying! I have no reason to lie!"

A large hand raised to silence her, her cries dying unwillingly in her throat and the king glared. "You are already on thin ice, Momoko. Do not make this worse for yourself," he warned. There was a long moment where he sat in silence, fingers tap tap tapping on the queen's bare thigh as he thought. The pressure in her throat grew heavier. "You will go to Mitsuki," he said finally, making the nekomata straighten in surprise at the words. "You will go to her and beg sanctuary in her clan. She is more often than not a kind woman, though stupid. She will grant it for a time. You will stay there and you will contact me the moment her blessed son enters this realm. Do you understand me?"

Momoko could do nothing but nod in agreement, tears prickling at her eyes as she struggled to breath past the closing of her throat. She scratched at her neck almost desperately, wishing to cry and out and beg to him.

"We will see if these rumors are true. And if so, we will kill the creature where it stands."

Chapter End Notes

Laughs in Cliffhanger

I am awful at fight scenes, so I hope that was all okay! I had this

specific image in my head of Izuku wanting to prove that he was worthy without a quirk, kind of like he did at the sports festival, in order to earn Mitsuki's respect. Hopefully that came across well.

Another side note because I didn't mention it. The new King and Queen in the second scene are NOT Kitsune, but don't worry, you didn't miss anything. We'll find out what they are soon. :)

Hope you all enjoyed! Eat your veggies and drink your water!

Chapter 31: Interlude 2.0

Chapter Summary

More art?

So I KNOW it's been a really hot minute since I posted a new chapter and I'm super sorry! I *promise* I'm working on it! I've had some really bad mental health days recently and I've been struggling with writing and school and work all just building up with my crap mental state. Please forgive me. I'm working on the next chapter, I promise, it's just giving me more trouble than I expected it to.

So I beg your forgiveness and offer some quick art sketches for your patience. The first is how I imagined Izuku's hero costume. Hopefully it's easy enough to read since AO3 doesn't always like my quality for pictures (but you can find it on my twitter too) and the second is just some random sketches I felt like drawing one day to hopefully build up some creative juices. I'm working on two other pictures for this series too, but they're bigger projects that I'm not done with yet, so keep an eye out for those!

I'm *hoping* to have the next chapter out by the end of this week, but I really can't make promises. I really appreciate you guys sticking with me despite my slump!

VERIDIAN COSTUME DESIGN

And for a little treat, here's a sneak peak of one of the bigger pictures I'm working on because I'm super happy with how it's turning out so far. Extra points to anyone who figures out which chapter it's from.

Gallery

Chapter 32: Showing Mercy

Chapter Summary

Katsuki receives his challenge and Hideko makes a mistake.

Chapter Notes

OH MY GOSH HI I'M BACK AND READY TO GET THE BALL ROLLING AGAIN!
I am SO sorry that this took so long but I'm eternally grateful for how patient and amazing you all are. Thank you so much for sticking with me! I'm planning one or two more chapters in the Ikai and then we're going home and I should be back on my (nonexistent) schedule of busting out chapters by then. It still probably won't be as fast as it was, but I'm hoping to try and get back into posting regularly.
Writing in the Ikai is a lot harder than writing in canon plot areas. BUT we still have a long way to go and I'm so excited for what I have in store so enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“You’re a dumbass, Izuku,” Katsuki growled when they’d rejoined the rest of the pack at the bottom of the dais. Shouto was already flittering around Izuku like a worried mother, checking his (healed) injuries and twisting his face back and forth for any sign of damage.

Still, regardless of his words, Katsuki couldn’t help but feel a swell of pride in his chest when he thought back on the battle. Thought back on the way the greenette stood before the *Queen* and challenged her to a battle despite knowing he wouldn’t win. He didn’t look worried or afraid. He looked brave, stubborn even. And it was *hot as fuck*. Just like watching Shouto take out his opponent in barely a second.

It was a weird feeling, the way it sat warm and heavy in his chest, but not an unwelcome one. Kind of like the way he felt when they fox piled. Like his fox was content and happy with who he’d chosen to be near him. Who he’d chosen to be *his*.

That aching in his teeth came back when Izuku smiled at them, unbothered by the danger he’d inadvertently put himself into. The same feeling he’d had hours ago in the privacy of their rooms. The need to claim, to bite, to *mark*. It wasn’t overwhelming, but it

was *there* and he couldn't ignore it. The fox wouldn't let him, but Katsuki held back. Not because he was scared, but because he didn't know what it meant. Didn't know what would happen if he gave in, how it would change things, if it was dangerous or not. It was an unknown and he hated unknowns.

"Kaachan?"

The blonde hummed, blinking out of his thoughts and dragging his eyes away from the greenette's throat and up to his curious eyes. "What?"

"The queen said it's your turn," he answered.

Katsuki jolted at that, head whipping around to face the smug looking woman. "The fuck? Why can't Eyebags go next? I figured I had to go last or some shit."

Mitsuki waved her hand in the air and rolled her eyes at him- which was rude as *fuck* and made Katsuki want to growl at her if he didn't know Izuku would look all disappointed in him. "As I was saying, the satori has already proven himself. No need to do it again. I'd like to see you next anyhow." The young kit made a questionable noise in the back of his throat and the Queen sighed. "He has already defended your pack from an enemy. Shouta told me what happened at your festival and how your Satori protected you, supported you. That is enough for me and Shouta's recommendation is practically the same as seeing it myself. You however, I want to see."

"Wha-" Katsuki scoffed, throwing his arms up as if to argue. "I'm the one who killed the thing! Eyebags just fought them off until I got there! How is that good enough but me killing the thing isn't?"

Mitsuki shrugged. "Because I said so. Besides, you *did* let one of them get away. Whether it was on purpose or not, that in and of itself could pose a danger to your pack. Which means I need further proof that you are worthy of the honor I'm giving you."

"What *honor*?"

"The honor of a pack bond," she answered as if it was obvious. Her piercing red eyes found his and she raised an eyebrow at him. "You may not know much about our ways, Katsuki, but know this. A pack bond is the second strongest bond we have, right behind the mate bond. Your pack will be more important than your own flesh and blood. They will become your family, a part of you. When you take

the pack bond, you are not simply making a promise to each other to fight and protect, you are connecting yourselves on a spiritual level. You are connecting your souls for the rest of time. That is no short order, you understand." And no, Katsuki did *not* understand because it sounded a lot like hoodoo mumbo jumbo, but he couldn't help but listen intently at the seriousness in her tone, the sharpness in her eyes. "A pack bond is blessed by the gods themselves, and while we have no idea how it will work with your… unorthodox pack," she admitted with a shrug, "that does not mean the traditions are not important. I will see you fight. You will prove to me that you will protect what is yours and you will honor what we are giving you. Do you understand?"

The courtyard was silent for a long while as mother and son stared each other down. It wasn't until Izuku shifted on his feet beside him that he let out a loud groan and dropped his head back. "Fuckin' fine! I'll fight your stupid tournament."

By the time he was in the arena, everyone had once again taken their seats and were eagerly awaiting what would come next. Katsuki meanwhile was glancing around at the different faces he didn't recognize or even care for. There was no one here who would be able to beat him and he wasn't about to pull the same shit that Izuku did and challenge his moth- the *Queen*… He could always challenge Aizawa, but somehow he figured that wouldn't go down well.

Not to mention the stupid fact that he couldn't use his fox here.

"Well?" he growled, turning towards the dais with a raised brows. "Someone good gonna fuckin' challenge me?"

Mitsuki opened her mouth to respond, to call on someone specific probably, only to be cut off when the girl in front of her stood.

Katsuki hadn't gotten the chance to talk to the other blonde- Hideko he thinks she was called –but it was impossible to deny that they were related. He'd seen her briefly during their stay, recognized the anger in her jaded looks, her glares. Not that he gave a flying fuck. They may be related, but he didn't give two shits if she was his sister or not.

In the blink of an eye she was in the arena, Katsuki having to spin around to face her. Her robes were gone now, replaced with a simple tunic and pants, and her bare feet were already braced on the ground ready for an attack.

They stared at each other for a good long while, Katsuki with his eyes

narrowed in contemplation and Hideko with her stance ready for the moment he said yes. Too fuckin' bad for her.

"No."

"No?"

Katsuki shook his head and turned half back towards his mother, crossing his arms over his chest in defiance. "No. I'm not going to fight her. Pick someone else."

The answer seemed to shock even Aizawa, who was watching him with that familiar calculating gaze of his. It was eerily similar to the look the Queen was leveling at him, but he didn't care. The answer was no and he wasn't about to fucking change it now.

"And why not? You can't deny my challenge," Hideko growled, her eyes burning and the weird magic marks on her face glowing in her anger.

"Just fuckin' did," Katsuki growled back, baring his sharpened teeth at the younger girl. "I'm not fuckin' fighting you. Challenge denied, the answer is no." But he could tell the answer didn't satisfy the girl, could see the stubbornness in her that he saw every morning in the mirror. He could see the anger and fury in her, demanding answers even as her tails thrashed behind her. "The fuck you think is going to happen, *princess?* You want to fight me to prove yourself, yeah? You want to show all these fuckers here that you're worthy of the throne or the clan or what the fuck ever," he questioned, earning him a wide eyed gaze from the girl. "Well I don't give a shit."

"Kaachan-"

The blonde ignored boyfriend, turning to face the shorter girl instead and taking a step towards he, eyes narrowed in warning. "You want the throne, right? You trained for it, you were born for it, you fought for it. And here I come, first born, ready to fuckin' sweep it right out from under you. That's what you think isn't it?" Hideko was shaking in front of him, not in fear, but in fury. Her fists were clenched and her jaw was twitching as she bared her teeth. Katsuki knew she wanted nothing more than to tear into him, the rules of the arena probably the only reason she wasn't. "Well I. Don't. Give. A. Shit. I don't *want* your throne. I don't *want* your clan or your kingdom," he spat, directing the words half towards his mother and half towards his sister. "What I *want* is to get this shit over with, do the stupid bond, and go the fuck home."

“Then *fight me*,” Hideko challenged again.

And Katsuki reared at her then, snapping his jaws in warning and fighting to keep the fox trapped in his skin where it belonged. “No! Because I’d *win*,” he told her. “I’d win, and then your stupid people will want me on the throne instead. You’d lose everything you wanted, and I’d gain everything I didn’t. I don’t want to fucking be king or ruler or what the fuck ever you people call it. I don’t *care*. But if I win then I’ll be trapped here out of duty or law or some bullshit I don’t give a shit about,” Katsuki hissed, barely registering the way his claws dug into the palms of his hands. “You can *have* the throne. I. Don’t. Want. It.”

There was a long, echoing silence throughout the courtyard and Katsuki forced himself to take a deep breath before turning towards his mother.

“Choose someone else as a challenger or I’m taking the automatic win.”

Mitsuki was staring at him then, her head ticked slightly to the side and her eyes searching. Again, not that Katsuki cared. He was pissed and on edge and the fox wanted nothing more than to gather up his pack and curl around them protectively. He wanted to go *home*.

“Very well, I-“

But she didn’t get to finish before a body was pressed up against Katsuki’s back, a low growl echoing in his ears as his sister spoke from behind him.

“If you won’t fight me, then I’ll *make* you.”

“Hideko, no!”

It all happened in a span of a few seconds. Katsuki barely had the time to react before she was racing past him and towards the edge of the arena. For a moment he had no idea what the hell she was doing- considering the fact she was running *away* from him –but her trajectory was too focused, too planned. She knew exactly what she was going for and it wasn’t him.

Katsuki didn’t think.

There was a flare of fire in his chest, an explosion that surged beneath his skin and he acted before he registered what he was even doing.

The girl's hand was only a breath away from Shouto's face, her claws glittering in the low sun and her jaws open, and Katsuki was already moving, wrapping his hand around her ankle and yanking her back towards him.

Distantly he could feel his claws digging into her skin, could feel the wind in his fur and the fire flickering around his massive form. Distantly he could hear Hideko screaming in pain as he slammed her back into the ground, could feel her clawing at him as she struggled underneath him, trying desperately to get away.

Distantly he could hear his name being called. Could feel fingers tangling in the thick fur on the back of his neck, tugging him away before he had the chance to clamp his jaw down on her throat.

"Katsuki *stop*."

And so he did.

The fox was growling, he knew. He could feel the rumbling in his chest, the rocks rolling around in his throat like they were tumbling down a mountain. Angry and loud. He could taste the blood on his tongue, feel the soft skin of her throat puncture under his sharpened teeth.

"Katsuki, let her go."

The voice was demanding. Familiar. He knew it and he knew not to argue with its owner. But still… the fox could see nothing but a *threat. Threat. Threat. Threat. She threatened what is mine. She went after my mate. Mine. Mine. Mine. She cannot be let go. She is a danger to my pack, to my mates. I won't let her hurt them-*

"Katsuki look at me. Look at me *now*."

Burning red eyes shifted when a new body came into his view. Red and white hair. Blue and brown eyes. A scar. *Mate*.

There was no expression on his mate's face, but his eyes were searching and hesitant. His hands grabbed at the fur around Katsuki's maw and held on even as the fox refused to pull away from the *threat*. "There you are," his mate said, voice rolling over him like soothing waters. "Look at me, Katsuki. I am fine. She didn't hurt me. She was only trying to rile you up." And yeah, *Katsuki* knew that, but the *fox* didn't care. The fox wanted to growl and snap and rip her head off of her shoulde- "No," his mate was speaking again, tugging

harshly at his fur to gain his attention. “You need to control yourself, Kat. You need to focus. I’m fine. Izuku is fine. The pack is fine. Remember what you told her. If you kill her now, you’ll have to be king and you don’t want that. You need to let her go.”

No! She is a threat!

I don’t fuckin’ want to be king.

Kill her.

You don’t fuckin’ control me. I want to go the fuck home.

She is a danger to what is ours. She is a threat that needs to be dealt with.

We don’t kill.

We don’t kill.

We don’t kill.

“Good, that’s it, Katsuki. Let her go.”

A whine escaped his throat when he allowed Shouto to pull him away. When he allowed the princess to scramble away from him and into the arms of his teacher. When he fought against every instinct the fox was trying to push into him. Because it *hurt* to tell it no. It *hurt* to let the threat go. Hurt because it could come back and Shouto could get hurt and it would be *his fault*.

“Katsuki, you need to turn back now.”

He didn’t *want* to. He couldn’t protect them like that. He was weak in his human form. Small. He needed to protect them, to-

“Katsuki,” those eyes were worried now, a look that was so unfamiliar in those two different colours, and they were joined by another pair of emerald green blinking down at him. “Katsuki, please turn back.”

Our mate is sad. He is scared of us.

Scared for *us, I think.*

By the time Katsuki fell to his all too human hands and knees, his body was shaking and his head was screaming at him. He could feel Izuku and Shouto at his sides holding him up, but it felt like it was taking all of his energy to keep the fox reeled back in, keep it trapped

in the cage of his ribs so he could have a moment to just *think*. To breathe.

“What is it? What’s wrong with him?”

“He is fine. Leave us, all of you,” the queen spat and Katsuki could hear the sounds of quickened footsteps rushing away from him, though the sound was muffled in his ears. “Shouta, you and the mates will stay, the rest of you go. Yui, take the pack to their room and keep them there until I call for them. Hideko, *stay*.”

And Katsuki wasn’t sure how long he stayed there, quivering and heaving, the struggle of control wracking through his body like dynamite in a collapsing mine, but by the time he was finally able to blink, it was just the six of them left in the open courtyard. Hideko was collapsed near her mother’s throne, Aizawa at her side as he finished tying off some bandages around her throat and ankle. Mitsuki was pacing a hole in the ground just outside of the arena, her face twisted in anger and her hair wild from running her fingers through it. And Shouto and Izuku were still knelt at Katuski’s side, wary and unsure in the tense environment.

“You should have *told me*, Shouta,” she was growling, practically spitting at her advisor. “You should have told me the moment you figured it out. But instead you kept it a secret and then you brought him *here*. What the hell were you thinking?”

His teacher rolled his eyes and sat back, waving a hand in Hideko’s direction. “I was thinking your daughter would have enough sense not to attack a kitsune’s *mates*. I was thinking you would keep to your word and we wouldn’t be here nearly as long as we have been. I was thinking you’d let us get in and out like you said you would and *this* wouldn’t have become an issue.”

“He’s a *kiko,* Shouta. My *son* is a *Kiko* and you didn’t think that was important enough to tell me?”

Honestly, even if his brain wasn’t all fuzzy, Katsuki wouldn’t have seen the big deal with the matter. Yeah, he was a Kiko, and logically he knew what it meant. He knew it was something sacred, something Aizawa wanted to keep a secret for his safety. But he didn’t figure it was that big of a deal.

“You *left him*,” Aizawa said sharply, a rare flicker of anger seeping through his usually blank expression. “You gave him away and didn’t want anything to do with him. The only reason you are interested now

is because he sought you out. You have no right to get upset when I don't tell you things about the son *you* gave away."

Mitsuki bared her teeth in warning and Katsuki could feel himself tensing at the action, his fox ready to launch into action to protect the man. "And *you* turned me away when I asked you to watch him. You didn't care back then. What gives you the right to decide what I can and cannot know about my own son now?"

"How about you both fuck off?"

Katsuki grunted as he pushed himself to his feet, supporting most of his weight on Shouto's shoulders as the fox finally started settling down within him and the pain began receeding. All eyes fell on him instantly and he sneered at them before turning his gaze towards the queen. "Aizawa had no obligations towards me when you showed up. He had no responsibility for me past his allegiance to you. I don't fuckin' blame him for saying no, and I wouldn't have changed it if I had the choice because I grew up fucking great, okay? And you have no fucking right to get mad at him because he's done nothing but protect us since he met us," Katsuki snapped protectively. "He almost *died* protecting us from villains and you're going to stand there and say he doesn't care? Fuck you."

"Kaachan," Izuku sighed quietly.

But he wasn't done, because he was pissed and he was hurting and he didn't want to be here in the first place so he wasn't about to hold his tongue just because Izuku thought he might need to be *polite*.

"He's right. You *left me*. And yeah, I fucking get it. As much as I hate to admit it, I understand why you did it. But the point is you still did," he argued. "I grew up being told stories about how great you were and how much you loved me, but you were never there. You never got to tell me those stories yourself. Even after we were attacked by one of *your* kind, you didn't so much as ask if I was okay. *You* cut me out, not the other way around. So if Aizawa decided to keep things from you for *my* protection, just like you kept me from everything else, then he has the fucking right to do that because I trust him. You have no authority over me or my life, not anymore. I'm only here because I have to be. *You* made me come here, not the other way around. Got it?"

And you know, it probably wasn't the *best* idea to yell at the queen of another dimension full of creatures that wanted to eat him. Katsuki

knew that. But he couldn't help himself because he was just so fucking *tired* of all this drama. Tired of being pushed and pulled in different directions, one of which he didn't care to be pulled in. Because he wasn't lying to Hideko. He didn't want the throne. He didn't want to stay here and rule. He wanted to go home with his pack and his boyfriends and his *mom*. He wanted to go to *school*. He wanted to train. He wanted to be a *hero* not a king.

"This is a little bigger than just our family drama, Katsuki," Mitsuki tried to say, though he could see on her face that she agreed with him at least somewhat. Or at the very least, she understood his frustration. "This goes beyond just being a royal."

"Yeah, I know," he scoffed, rolling his eyes at the woman. "I'm some sort of blessed fox with fancy powers or whatever. I get it, I'm special. Who fucking cares?"

"*Everyone*," the queen emphasized, drawing the boy's attention immediately. "Literally everyone cares, Katsuki. This isn't just you being 'blessed' as you say. This goes beyond that. Kiko's are not just born all the time. They're not just born because I had sex with your father. They don't just come out of the womb special. Kiko's are *created* Katsuki. The Kami make them for a purpose, one you won't be able to escape from even in your world. Not if they don't want you to."

And Katsuki decided he didn't like *that*. He didn't like being *made* for someone else's purpose. "Fuck that," he growled, pushing off Shouto to stand on his own and crossing his arms over his chest. "I don't believe in *destiny* or some crap like that. No one tells me what to do."

"It's not *destiny*," Mitsuki argued, shaking her head. "You were literally created for a purpose, Katsuki, whether you like it or not. What that purpose is, I don't know, but it is there. That's why it's so important that I should have known what you are. Not because it's an honor to have a Kiko in the family, not because you're my son," she sighed, clearly getting frustrated with the whole ordeal. "But because they made you for a reason and I don't know what it is. Which means now, more than ever, you need protected. You need to stay safe for whatever the Kami want you for. If you die before you get a chance to fulfill your purpose, for lack of a better term, then things could go very, very wrong. You cannot forsake the gods without *serious* consequences."

The blonde couldn't help but throw his arms up in frustration, just

barely avoiding smacking Izuku in the face as he turned to begin his own pacing. “They’re not *my* gods! I don’t give a shit about your culture or your traditions or your religion. I just want to get this shit done and go home. I don’t care what they want me to do. I don’t care if I’m special. I have a *life* already and I’m not giving it up just because you want to keep me locked in some protected cage for the rest of my life.”

“Kaachan,” Izuku mumbled, grabbing the edge of Katsuki’s sleeve with a frown, tugging him to a stop and glancing up at him. “Maybe we should listen to her. This sounds really serious and she’s clearly worried.”

Though he didn’t pull away from the boy, the Kitsune did sneer at him, waving his other hand wildly at the queen. “She doesn’t *know* anything! You heard her, she doesn’t even know why I was made. Listening won’t do any damn good if she doesn’t have anything helpful to say!”

“If you’d give me the chance to say anything, you damn brat, then you’d know I’m not planning on keeping you here.” Katsuki froze, crimson eyes snapping up in surprise and barely containing the growl that threatened to escape at the woman’s smug expression. “Keeping you here would be stupid as fuck. You may be a Kiko, but you’re still a hybrid, and despite you being ‘special’, we can’t just *tell* that you’re blessed from a glance like we can tell you’re a hybrid. If you kept your fox hidden then we would have never known in the first place. Which means you’re in danger here for multiple reasons. Those who wish to go against the Kami will hunt you down because they wish for chaos. Those who don’t know what you are will hunt you down because you are food. At least in your world, you will be limited in the contact with spirits.”

Oh… well, that wasn’t what he was expecting honestly. He’d figured she’d want to keep him here like Aizawa was afraid she would. Being sent home hadn’t exactly been an option in his head. “Oh.”

Mitsuki snorted and rolled her eyes. “Yes, *oh*. Which means we have a fuck ton to get done in a short amount of time. The bonding ceremony was supposed to be tomorrow in front of the whole clan. That’s how they usually work, but considering the situation, we’ll do it tonight with just the family. It will be stronger if you’re able to show your Kiko form and I’d rather no one else know what you are until after you leave at the very least. Once we finish the ceremony, I’ll have someone escort you home.”

“Fucking finally,” Katsuki sighed, only to grunt when Izuku elbowed him in the ribs.

“But first,” Mitsuki said, her exasperated tone growing harsher as she turned on her heel, eyes narrowing into a glare at her daughter. “Hideko,” she addressed sharply, the girl straightening up in surprise at the tone, “not only did you disrespect the rules of a time honored tournament, but you also disrespected our guests. Our *honored* guests. You should know better than to attack after a denial is given, and not only that, but you chose to attack his *mate* as well.”

The girl gapped at her mother, staggering to her feet with Aizawa’s help and returning her own glare. “Are you kidding me? I deserved that fight!”

“You deserved what you got and more,” Mitsuki snapped. “You’re lucky the red one stepped in when he did or you would be *dead*. In all honesty, you *should* be dead.”

“Mother!”

A sharp finger pointed in her direction shut the girl up and the queen straightened her back, looking for all the world like the royal she was. “No, Hideko. I’m not playing around here. To attack someone else’s mate, even if they *weren’t* a Kiko, is extremely dangerous and foolish. Katsuki would have been full well within his rights to kill you even though he denied the challenge,” she growled.

An ugly sneer twisted onto Hideko’s face and she turned her glare onto Shouto, barely acknowledging Katsuki who took a half step in front of his boyfriend. “They don’t even have marks!” she argued, thrusting an arm in their direction before turning back to her mother. “They are unmarked and unbonded!”

“And yet you chose to go after that one, instead of any of the other pack members,” was Mitsuki’s response, waving a hand towards Shouto. (And seriously, had *neither* of them learned the boy’s name? Because that felt like an offense in and of itself if Katsuki was being honest.) “You specifically chose him because you *knew* it would get the reaction you wanted. You knew Katsuki wouldn’t be able to stop his fox from reacting. Ceremonially mated or not, those boys are both spoken for. They are claimed, and *you* threatened them.”

Katsuki watched as the girl curled in on herself a bit, fingers reaching up to brush against the bandages on her throat. She looked like a scolded child, stubborn and wicked. Ready to argue even though she

knew she'd done wrong.

He couldn't help but wonder if he'd have turned out the same if his birth mother had raised him instead of Inko.

A great sigh heaved from Mitsuki's chest and she took a step back, waving towards the three teenagers with a stern expression on her face. "You will properly apologize. Not only to the red one for threatening him, but to Katsuki as well for disrespecting his decisions *and* attacking his mate. Then you will apologize to the green one for attacking *his* mate also. This is not a joke, Hideko. What you've done is a great offense and Katsuki is in his right to demand a punishment. I am bound by honor to agree to whatever terms he asks for whether I like it or not. You best pray he gives you mercy."

There was a struggle on her face as she stared her mother down, a battleground between them of silent arguments and unspoken words, but eventually Mitsuki won out. Like a line had been cut, Hideko fell to her knees and bowed her head until the back of her neck was bared, her hands outspread to her sides. Each one of her tails twitched before going slack behind her, something Katsuki's fox knew was a sign of submission, a sign to show them she meant no harm.

"By the light of the Kami and blessed within their grace, I humbly apologize Master Shouto," Hideko started, her jaw clenched as she spoke the rehearsed words through her teeth. "The disrespect I showed you was unbecoming and undeserving. I beg your forgiveness. By the light of the Kami and blessed within their grace, I humbly apologize Master Izuku," she went on without hesitation, not daring to look up from where her eyes were downcast. "By attacking your mate, I have thus attacked you. The disrespect I showed was unbecoming and undeserving."

Izuku opened his mouth, hands already up and waving the apology away only for him to freeze when Aizawa met his eye and shook his head. There was a stern sort of expression on his face, one Katsuki had rarely seen except when the man was particularly peeved about something. So none of the three teens interrupted.

After a brief pause, Hideko took a deep breath and dropped herself even further until her forehead rested on her now folded hands on the dirt. "By the light of the Kami and blessed within their grace, I humbly apologize Prince Katsuki. By attacking and disrespecting your mates, I have thus attacked and disrespected you. It is a dishonor undeserving and I beg your forgiveness for my foolishness. I welcome

the punishment you deem fit to bestow me."

The courtyard fell into silence then as the three boys all stared, one with wide eyes and the other two seemingly uncaring.

After too long, Aizawa sighed and rubbed a hand over his face. "Normally Hitoshi would accept the apologies for you since he's your second, but in this case, you can do it. But you need to do something or she's not allowed to get up," he informed them.

"Like… ever?" Izuku squeaked, earning a snort from the queen.

Aizawa shrugged. "If you were not to accept her apology or give her punishment, then it means she is not forgiven. This would be considered her punishment for such a high crime. If Katsuki wasn't also a royal, then the punishment might not be so severe, but he is. Not to mention, he is the eldest. As it stands, Hideko has insulted the mates of the Royal Heir, as well as the Heir himself, and that is a crime punishable by death if he sees fit."

"Fuckin'- you damn royals and your stupid rules," Katsuki scoffed, rolling his eyes. "Just don't fuckin' do it again or I'll rip your throat out with my teeth, regardless of what half-and-half over here thinks."

When she still didn't move, Katsuki jabbed an elbow in Shouto's ribs and the boy jolted in surprise.

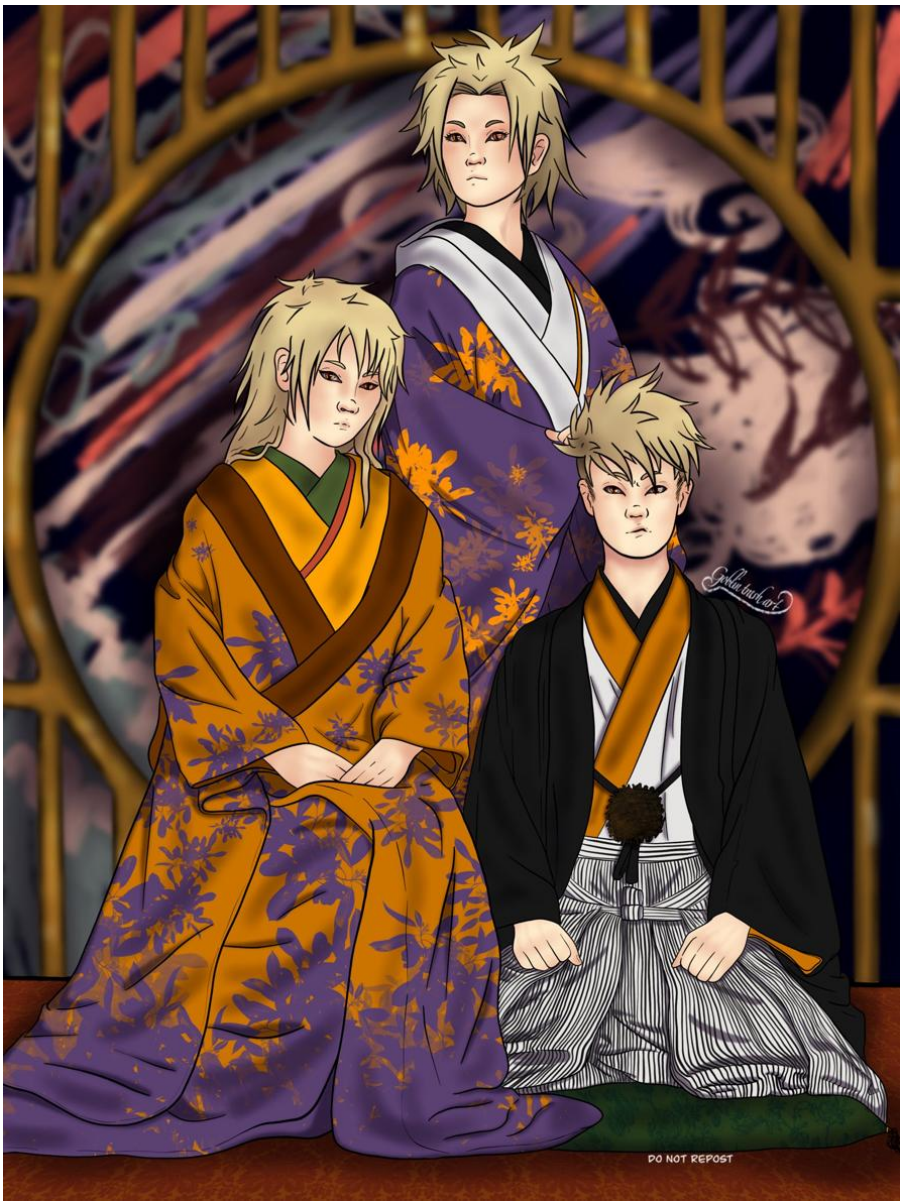
"Oh- yes, I was not offended in the least. So I feel as if I cannot forgive you. However if that's what you need to hear, then you have my forgiveness," the boy said a bit awkwardly.

Izuku bobbed his head in agreement, his curls bouncing wildly on the top of his head. "Yes! Same here- that is- I mean I forgive you I guess. Just- you know, don't do it again. Mostly because Kaachan isn't kidding, he probably will rip your throat out, but also I'm not going to stand there and let you hurt Shouto."

"We protect our own," Katsuki said as Hideko finally pushed herself to her feet, her face twisted in a conflicted sneer though she kept her gaze on the ground. "You go after my pack and I go after you. You got mercy this time because where I come from, we don't kill people and IcyHot here is a pushover, but I won't give it again. Stay the fuck away from my people."

"Great!" Mitsuki grinned, clapping her hands together loudly before spreading them out before her. "Then let's get ready for a bonding!"

cough cough In other news, have some art for being lovely and patient. *cough cough*



Chapter End Notes

Yeet!

Drink water and love yourselves!

As a side note I finished my last semester in university last week and I'm officially a college graduate! WOOHOO! I now have a degree to go with my mad fanfiction writing! lol
Anyway, hope you liked this chapter! On to the next!

Chapter 33: Starlight

Chapter Summary

> And so the bonding ceremony commences.

Chapter Notes

> We're finally here! OMG this chapter was so much fun to write and is probably one of my favorites so far. Hopefully you guys like it too! Thanks for all the loving words and support! I can't wait to jump headfirst back into this fic!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

That night the pack was led to a large Pagoda in the center of the village, easily the tallest and nicest building there and painted in beautiful reds and golds and blacks. The inside was completely open, with walkways along the walls above them, and Katsuki had to crane his neck back just to see the ceiling over six stories up at least. And the inside was no less ornate than the outside, with expertly crafted murals sprawling across the walls and mosaiaced tiles beneath their bare feet. Golden lanterns hung on the walls or from poles in the center of the main room, forming a large circle around a strange design on the center floor tiles.

It was gorgeous, not that Katsuki was willing to admit it.

It hadn't taken long for the pack to get ready, each donning the much more formal Kakeshita style kimonos they were gifted by the Queen. They all matched, set in deep blacks with sharp orange designs at the hems, though Katsuki's was the opposite colours as everyone else. Katsuki thought it was all a waste, but the moment he'd brought it up, Aizawa had gone off on tradition and symbolism and a bunch of bullshit that the young kit really could not give two shits about so he just gave in instead. Plus, everyone seemed pretty excited about the fact that they got to keep the outfits.

And he figured if the pack was happy, then it was worth the hassle at least a little bit.

The queen stood in the center of eight fancy zabuton cushions when they made their way inside, all surrounding the large design on the floor and perfectly spaced. Hideko was nowhere to be seen, but Katsuki wasn't necessarily surprised. Aizawa had told him that it'd

only be them and the queen as well as one priestess who was meant to assist the preparations. Not that he really wanted his sister there anyway. He was completely and utterly fed up with the family drama and just wanted to get this over with. The less family the better really.

“I must preface this by telling you all that this ceremony has never involved humans before,” Mitsuki said when they’d all gathered in the room and their teacher had led them to their respective cushions (with Shouto and Izuku on either side of Katsuki, and Shinsou and Kirishima on their sides and so on.) “It’s not that it isn’t allowed, simply that it’s never been done before. I cannot promise this won’t be painful, and I cannot promise it will even work. I have faith considering your bonds with each other are so strong already, but I cannot make any guarantees, do you understand?”

They all shared glances before nodding and the queen repeated the motion.

“Good, then we will get started in the preparations. Now, traditionally this ceremony is done naked,” the woman said, smirking when the others began sputtering and getting ready to argue. Because yeah, what the *fuck*? Not only was his *mother* the one doing the ceremony, but their *teacher who they had to see every day* was going to be there. Yeah, Katsuki would rather not, thank you very much. Mitsuki chuckled and held up a hand to stop them all, rolling her eyes. “Yes, yes, I’ve been made aware that this is something a lot more taboo for your kind. Shouta has made sure to inform me. Regardless, there are parts of this that we cannot avoid, so I at least need access to your chests and back. This is why you were not provided with the full pieces to your kimonos.”

“The girls may keep their undergarments on if they want to,” Aizawa interrupted, showing no discomfort in the topic and shrugging as if he really didn’t care.

“Do we have to?” Mina questioned.

Kirishima sputtered beside her, his face turning nearly as bright as his hair as he turned towards the girl. “You *want* to-to be- Mr. Aizawa is here!”

The pink girl scoffed and waved a hand at him. “They’re just boobs, Kiri. Besides, Mr. Aizawa is gay *and* not human. You heard the queen, she made it sound like being naked is just kind of a thing here. It’s not that big a deal. Besides, it sounds like this isn’t going to be easy in the

first place. If getting as close as we can to what is traditionally done will help, then I don't mind."

Hatsume seemed to agree with her as she simply shrugged in response and Katsuki forced himself not to sigh.

He honestly didn't give two shits either way. Whatever made them comfortable and got this shit done. Besides, the boys had no issues with showing their chests, the blonde didn't see a reason why the girls shouldn't be allowed to.

"I shall leave the decision up to you," Mitsuki smiled at the two girls before gesturing towards a woman at the far end of the room. "Yui here will be assisting me in getting you ready. She will be using a plant and berry based paste to draw the necessary holy symbols onto your bodies. These will be your connections to each other. They will serve as the binding agents between your bodies and souls," the queen explained as the woman stepped into the circle, two large bowls in her hands and a series of brushes hanging from her hip.

The smell of the paste was strange in his nose. Sharp and acrid but still somehow… pleasant in a way. Like a berry smoothie mixed with paint.

"So it's like henna?" Kaminari asked, raising his chin to try and get a glance at the mixture.

Confusion twisted on the blonde woman's face and Aizawa sighed from where he stood just outside of the circle. "In a way, yes. It will not stain your skin the way henna does. Not in the physical sense at least."

Katsuki frowned at that. "What does that mean? 'Physical sense'?"

"As I said, these designs will be symbolic of your bonds together," Mitsuki explained, pushing one of the sleeves of her own kimono up to reveal pale skin. "Once the ceremony is done and the bonding complete, the symbols will wash away to the general eye, but you will always see them, and-" they all watched in awe as beautiful blue light began to shimmer over Mitsuki's arm, creating complicated and amazing designs before disappearing once again. Like ripples over still waters, "they can be seen if you wish for them to. No matter what however, you will always see each other's bonds."

"Magic tattoos," Kami breathed in awe, drawing a snort from Katsuki. "That's so rad."

Mitsuki gave the electric blonde a fond smile before nodding. “Indeed it is. These designs will need to be perfectly done however so you will need to remain still. Each one of you will get them and once completed, we will begin the ceremony. Do you have any questions?”

Unsurprisingly, Izuku’s hand shot into the air beside Katsuki and the queen nodded towards him. “Mr. Aizawa- ah, I mean, Shouta- said once that he could *sense* you when he was in the Ikai because you’re pack bonded. Will we be able to do that too? How deep does the pack bond go? Is it like the soulmate stories we have in our own world where we’ll feel each other’s pain or read each other’s thoughts?”

“A curious one aren’t you?” The queen giggled before shaking her head. “I can only tell you what we have traditionally seen here among our own people, considering, as I said, it’s never been done with humans. Each pack is different and their bonds are formed based on their needs and experiences. So yes, we have seen some bonds form where the pack members have been able to share pain, though never sharing injuries. Some are able to sense each other’s emotions or thoughts, but I’ve never seen a bond strong enough to fully read minds. In addition, some packs- like my own- are able to share abilities through their bond. Shouta is more skilled in manipulating energies and magic, where I am more skilled in illusion work. If the need called for it however, I could call on my bond with him and use his knowledge and ability to manipulate magic as needed,” she explained. “Between all packs however is the ability to sense each other, yes. Katsuki no doubt has already experienced this in a way as he has already begun the process of establishing pack bonds.”

“What do you mean?” Shouto asked with a frown, glancing at Katsuki as if he knew what the fuck the old hag was talking about.

Mitsuki hummed, tilting her head from side to side in thought. “There is always some sort of leader in an established pack. These are usually called alphas, though Shouta likes to jokingly call them den mothers,” she snorted, rolling her eyes.

“Oh em gee, Kitty Kat,” Mina squealed, leaning forward slightly on her cushion in order to grin at Katsuki. “You *are* pack mom! We knew it and we didn’t even know it!”

“Fuck off, Pinky!” But he too was a bit surprised at the fact that he’d already- unknowingly- started the process. Then again, he couldn’t deny the queen’s words. He was able to sense the others, though it wasn’t necessarily strong. It was more that he could just tell their

general direction, could get a sense of their very basic sense of being (whether they were frustrated or sad).

“It often develops like that, yes,” Mitsuki continued with a smirk. “Once the bond is completed, you should all be able to feel that connection. You’ll be able to sense each other’s emotions, be able to know where they are at any point in time as long as they are in the same realm as you. It’s a basic survival instinct for packs so you’ll be able to better protect each other. Past that basic connection, I’m not sure what to expect when it comes to abilities you’ll gain, if any. This will be a learning curve for all of you and none of us will quite know what will happen. You should be prepared for that.”

“Still time to back out, ya cowards,” Katsuki joked, his grin sharp and his arms crossed over his chest. There was a bit of nerves fluttering in his stomach, but his fox was practically purring with excitement inside him. It was begging for this connection, for the knowledge that his pack would be safe and happy with him as their leader.

When no one spoke up, Aizawa took a step forward, his expression serious. “This is your last chance to say no,” he said sternly, making eye contact with each and every one of his students. “You have to remember that this connection will be strong no matter what. Even if you don’t get the extra perks that most packs do, you have to take this into consideration. You’re all training to be heroes. Your lives will constantly be on the line, you will constantly be in danger. This is something that could definitely help you in the long run, but it will also be difficult. You could potentially sense when each other are in trouble or hurt, but you might also be able to *feel* it just as badly. If one of the pack members die, you will all suffer from the loss. This is not some children’s blood pact. This is binding your souls together for eternity. There is no backing out once you agree to this. You will have to live with whatever consequences come with it.”

The group was quiet for a long time, sharing glances and thoughtful expressions. But even though his words were true, Katsuki knew none of them were backing down now. He could feel it.

“Yeah but, you can help with that, Mr. Aizawa,” Izuku chimed in after a moment, a hesitant smile on his face. “We’re still students. So yeah, feeling someone else get hurt or knowing they’re in danger can get distracting, especially in moments where it’s life or death for us, but you can help us figure it out. We have two more years of school after this. We can learn to ignore the extra pain or sensations, learn to use it to our advantage.”

And so that was that.

With a final agreement that no one was backing out of anything, the preparations began.

One by one they dropped the tops of their kimono's until the silken fabric pooled around their waists and legs, the air around them warm against their bare skin. As promised, neither Hatsume nor Mina seemed bothered by the fact that they were half naked, and none of the others said anything about it, just like no one said anything about the curved, crescent shaped scars on Sero's ribs.

Yui, the painter, took her time on each and every one of them, using the first bowl (filled with water) to wash their hands and forearms, before moving on to paint, her paintbrush dragging soft and curling designs around the different pack member's bodies. They began on their backs, the paste a dark brownish-black colour that began to form intricate swirls and designs that spread up their shoulders, over their arms and down their chests, all coming to a sharp point just above their belly buttons. Simpler, though no less beautiful, designs were painted onto their cheeks and throats, then smaller ones across their palms and fingers when the painter positioned their hands to rest on their knees to dry.

By the time she reached Katsuki, the last to be prepared, each member of the pact had perfectly matching designs etched onto their skin. Part of him wondered if they would look strange to outsiders, if the designs didn't look at home on their skin like Katsuki thought they did, but he found it didn't really matter. The fox inside of him was practically crooning in delight, pushing up against his skin in so much excitement that he could barely sit still when Yui finally came to position behind him.

Eventually he too was painted and ready to go, the only difference between himself and the others being a delicate design that was painted in the center of his forehead. He couldn't see it, but Izuku and Shouto had looked at it like it was something special so he couldn't help but grin at them once it was done.

He kept his tails hidden as instructed before they'd arrived, though Aizawa assured him that once the preparations were done, he would be allowed to release them and his ears since his Kitsune form would be paramount to forming a strong bond. So the moment the woman was finished and had disappeared out the door, his tails were practically bursting into existence behind him before two of them

curled easily around Izuku and Shouto's waist like they belonged there.

The moment Mitsuki took her place back in the center of the circle, Katsuki knew it was time. The lanterns in the building flickered once before going out, the only ones still lit being the ones that hung from the poles around their circle, casting a little bubble of light for just them. Distantly Katsuki could hear Aizawa behind him where there was a shrine built into one of the temple walls and with a sharp *schwick* of a match, the scent of sharp, spiced incense filled the area and their senses.

Feeling the dense seriousness in the air, the pack was silent, waiting in the positions they were left in and watching as Mitsuki took a deep breath. A bell was rung behind them and Mitsuki dipped herself into a deep, 90 degree bow twice before clapping her hands and repeating the bow. She then began the beginning of what sounded like a prayer, one even Katsuki began to recognize as she went on as the Hi-Fu-Mi norito. (A prayer of purification and good blessings if he remembered correctly from the few times he'd heard Auntie Hinko recite it.)

"By the light of the Kami and blessed in their grace, we come before the holy with only respect in the depths of our hearts," Mitsuki continued once the Hi-Fu-Mi was completed, her voice quiet even as it seemed to echo off the darkness around them. "We ask for your eyes to see the bonds connecting these souls. We ask for your ears to hear our prayers. We ask for your blessings to join together as one beneath our mother sky and above our sister earth."

And see, Katsuki had never been religious. Sure, he'd let Izuku drag him to the temples during holidays and celebrations. He'd left a prayer to Kirishima's mother's shrine out of respect, and he *believed* in the various Kami and spirits. (They were kind of hard to deny considering he was one). But he'd never actively practiced any prayers or rituals on his own. Never felt the need or the care to.

Still, even Katsuki could feel the change in the room when the queen called the Kami to her. The air grew thick and warm, though not uncomfortably so, and the firelight of the lanterns flickered shadows across the floors and walls like ghosts. He knew the others noticed too as Izuku and Shouto tensed at his sides and the others let out soft, awed gasps.

Sensing a presence at his side, Katsuki glanced over just as Aizawa knelt between him and Izuku, taking each of their hands together

before joining them until their fingers intertwined. He then began to twist a deep black ribbon around their wrists and hands as Mitsuki turned to face them. The beautiful lines of her own bond marks were glimmering and visible in the low lantern light, her eyes burning a bright gold when she stared down at Katsuki.

“Blessed are the ties that bind us in body, mind, and spirit. Blessed are the hands that hold us in times of love and struggle and sickness. Blessed are the lives you gift us, so we may protect and strengthen and support. By the light of the Kami and blessed in their grace, a bond is forged in the soul.”

The moment her words faded into the air, Katsuki could feel a cool burn flood his veins and he couldn’t help but tighten his fingers where they were clasping Izuku’s. The other boy gasped beside him, the paint on both of them seeming to almost melt into their skin before taking on a bright, golden-orange light. Like the flickering flame of a candle or the gentle embers of a campfire.

And just like that he could *feel* the bond between him and the greenette at his side solidify. True, he’d always had a strong connection with the boy, but this time was different. This time was like… like if Katsuki closed his eyes he wouldn’t be able to tell the difference between what was him and what was Izuku. Like if someone brushed a finger across Izuku’s hand, Katsuki would feel it plain as day on his own.

And then the process repeated with Aizawa tying together Izuku and Kirishima’s hands, the prayer repeating, before moving on to the next. And so on and so on.

Each time the next person’s paint melted away, Katsuki could feel the ice water washing through him, flooding him with such a force that he couldn’t help but gasp for air. It was like he was drowning but in all the best ways. Like something was pulling him in so deep and he didn’t even want to swim to the surface.

Eventually he couldn’t tell where he began and the others ended. He couldn’t tell if the excitement in his bones was his or Hatsume’s. Couldn’t tell if the surprised awe was his or Kaminari’s or Shinsou’s. Couldn’t tell if the tears in his eyes were threatening to pool over his own cheeks or Mina’s. And with each connection finished, each bond made, the sensations only grew stronger and the light in the room from their glowing marks grew brighter. It was almost suffocating by the time Aizawa knelt between Katsuki and Shouto, *almost* unbearable

when he connected their palms and began twisting another silk ribbon around them.

“Blessed are the ties that bind us in body, mind, and spirit,” he heard Mitsuki repeat for the eighth time, and he managed to focus just enough to hear the other voices layered and layered atop her own, to see the writhing shadows on the walls and the way the flames in the lanterns were thrashing about against a nonexistent wind. “Blessed are the hands that hold us in times of love and struggle and sickness. Blessed are the lives you gift us, so we may protect and strengthen and support. By the light of the Kami and blessed in their grace, the bond is finally forged.”

Her hands came together in a loud thundered clap, her body dipping down into a bow, and the world around him exploded in light.

“Open your eyes, little kit. It is time to say hello.”

The words were fuzzy in his ears. Not in the way that words were normally fuzzy because of the damage his ears had taken, but like someone was talking to him underwater and he couldn’t focus long enough to know what they were saying. Long enough to piece together the meanings of the letters and sounds.

“That’s it, you have it. Look at me.”

His eyes were open now, though he didn’t remember doing so. Around him the world was nothing but a glow of white-gold and shimmering waves of pearlescent shadows. There was no air, but the breath Katsuki drew in was cold and soothing within him, like he was gulping down chilled water after wandering the desert.

“Look at me, little one. See me before you as I have seen you.”

So he looked.

And he saw.

The being before him was hard to focus on, though he could see the fluttering of crème robes and dark hair. He was sure there was a face there, sure there were golden eyes staring down at him and a soft smile sent in his direction, but he couldn’t focus on it, couldn’t see *it clearly. Hands were outstretched and without moving they framed the young kitsune’s face, warm and gentle and filled with… with* something *that Katsuki couldn’t put a name to. Love? Adoration? Something even more?*

“Oh my sweet little thing, look how beautiful you are. Look how strong you’ve grown.”

Was he strong? Was he beautiful?

Katsuki couldn’t even remember what he looked like right now. Couldn’t remember the feeling of his own body.

If he focused hard enough past the fuzz and the light, he could feel the pressure around his hands and wrists, feel the lack of air in his lungs and the way his tongue pressed against his teeth like he wanted to say something but didn’t know how.

“Don’t fret. You are safe here, Katsuki.” And the way they said his name was like a balm across a scorching burn. Like a mother soothing his nightmares and a lovers kisses across his cheeks. He wanted them to say it again and again and again. “Katsuki,” they repeated, the hint of a smile in their voice and for a moment he thought he could see it on their face. “Katsuki, I have long awaited for your arrival. You took so long and yet you come here so strong. You come here with a pack at your back. You could not imagine how proud I am of you, my little one. My precious one. Oh, look how bright you burn.”

He was staring down at his own hands now, the being holding him from behind and raising his hands in their own. He could feel them pressed up against his back, feel their breath across the back of his neck and their essence surrounding him like a heated blanket.

“Look how bright you burn, my darling. See the stars that you were born from, the space dust that litters your skin like tiny little explosions. Look how beautiful you are.”

Had he always glowed like that? His skin looked like it’d been painted in a shimmering golden hue, the palms of his hands radiating the same light as the shadows that flickered in the corners of his vision. In the nonexistent air around him sat little embers of burning white, like fireflies reflecting off his own light.

Was he made of stars? Had he always been made of stars?

“An explosion of being, that’s what you are. Bursting from the seams and collapsing like a dying star. Constantly burning and destroying and creating. What a blessing you are. What perfection. My perfect little creation.”

Katsuki didn’t know where he was. He didn’t know what *he was.*

All he knew was the light and the being and the pressure around his arms. Were they his arms? Had they always been his arms? Why did it feel like they were someone else's? Why did it feel like if he moved, seven others moved with him?

Why was his head so fuzzy?

"Because you are not meant to be here, my little star," the voice whispered at his back, cold fingers brushing lovingly across his palms and up his wrists. He shivered against the chill. "But I am a selfish creature and I longed to see you. I longed to get just a glimpse of what you've grown into. What you have created from what I gave you. No, no, darling. Keep our eyes open, keep them on me."

Had his eyes closed? He didn't remember closing them. Then again, he didn't remember opening them either and yet the light was there and the being was smiling down at him once more, their hands cradling his face from the front.

"There you are. Focus on me, little kit, for I did not bring you here just to see you." Why was he here, then? Where was here? "You will learn in due time the importance of what I have given you. You claim not to believe in destiny, and yet you run towards it like a beast on the hunt. Powerful. Graceful. Incredible." Fingers brushed through his hair, cradled his chin, traced the creases of his palms. "I made you to be a guiding light, my dearest one. There are trying times coming and changes are being made. You will be the one to change them. You will be the one to stand before the universe and burn. My little starlight. Oh how proud I am to call you mine."

Gentle lips pressed against the glowing light between his brow and he could feel the warmth of a thousand suns burn across his veins, feel the strength of meteors within his bones.

"Your time is coming, Katsuki. So keep running towards your destiny. Keep chasing your dreams and growing. Keep shining."

No. No wait- where are you going? Don't leave me- don't go- please!

"Be my guiding star, Katsuki."

"Katsuki."

"Katsuki."

“-KATSUKI!”

Chapter End Notes

Ahhhhhh! What excitement. What mystery.

A lot of the ceremony in this chapter is heavily inspired by actual japanese prayer practices, however I fictionalized a lot of it. I changed some stuff to better fit the world they're in. Hope it worked out well!

Also we stan a good Trans Sero. You can pry my baby boy from my cold dead fingers.

You what's not a mystery? You drinking water and loving yourself. Get to it. Chop chop. Momma Goblin waits for no child.

Love you all!

Chapter 34: Bonded

Chapter Summary

Izuku adjusts and Hitoshi drowns.

Chapter Notes

Woah this chapter ended up way longer than usual! But I guess it makes up for not posting in a hot second. We're about to be back on our regularly scheduled canon plot (ish). So I should be able to write faster. We'll see. I keep saying that and then it doesn't happen lol. Anyway, enjoy this chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

There was a hum under his skin when Izuku finally opened his eyes. The lights around them were dim, a fact his sore retinas were thankful for, and the others were clearly all still frazzled as they struggled back into focus. It was weird, the feeling in his chest, in his head. Like a pressure against the inside of his skin trying to release.

He wondered briefly if this is what it felt like to have a quirk.

The feeling was so foreign to him, but at the same time it wasn't. It felt kind of like Katsuki in a way…

As long as he could remember, Izuku had been able to feel Katsuki. Even if the other boy wasn't in the room, Izuku could *feel* him nearby, could sense him. Not in the literal sense, not in the way that Mandalay might sense someone… but in the way that like… you might know your phone is in your back pocket or how twins are just always aware of the other.

He'd been able to sense when Katsuki was hurt or upset even if they were on opposite sides of the school. He could sense when the boy needed to transform or when he was struggling with something but refused to tell the greenette what it was.

Izuku had always figured it was just because the two of them were so close. They'd practically spent every waking moment of their entire lives together, of course they'd know each other like the back of their hands.

And this was kind of like that.

He was aware of Mina's excitement and Mei's curiosity. He was aware of the hum of electricity running through Denki's veins and the chill of Shouto's breath. He was aware of the pressure in his head that was akin to a mild panic when Hitoshi began stirring beside him.

And he was aware of the blinding white light coming from Katsuki.

It wasn't *physically* coming from the boy. But it was like… like it was burning under his skin from where he was still sitting in his position in the circle. His eyes were glowing that familiar gold, but he wasn't blinking. He didn't even look like he was breathing.

"K-Kaachan?" Izuku croaked, his voice feeling like he'd been screaming for hours.

The other's glanced in their direction, Aizawa-Sensei turning from where he was hovering over a worryingly pale Hitoshi. The queen was off a ways, like she was hesitant to involve herself in the new pack, and Izuku couldn't help but feel grateful that she was distant. He wasn't sure how her son might react to seeing her right now and Izuku didn't want to have to deal with that on top of everything else.

When the blonde didn't respond, Izuku shuffled closer on his knees and frowned, reaching a shaking hand out to grab onto Katsuki's unresponsive one. "Kaachan? Can you hear me?"

Panic wracked through him when there was no response, muffled and sudden and not entirely his. It was like there were seven other voices in his head, screaming and yelling and crying and he couldn't *focus* enough to think. It was like his entire body was numb, like he was floating around it and someone else was moving his hands, someone else was breathing, someone else was shaking.

If this is what a quirk felt like, Izuku wasn't sure he'd ever want one.

"You all need to calm down."

The voice was quiet, but the sternness in the tone was familiar and jarring enough to make Izuku focus on it. Aizawa was staring at them all, one hand grasped in Hitoshi's and the other held out towards the group like he was trying to tame a pack of wild animals. (And Izuku hadn't quite noticed it before, but they'd all started gravitating towards each other, nearly close enough to touch shoulder to shoulder.)

"You're bond is still settling," the teacher told them calmly. "It's going

to feel weird for a while and you're going to feel much more connected to the others and more disconnected from yourself. That's normal, but it's going to feel strange to you right now. You need to stay calm and focus or the bond will crack and you run the risk of losing yourselves completely. Do you understand?"

"It's like my ADHD has been amped up to ten," Denki complained, fidgeting in his spot until Mina wrapped herself around him, settling the nervous energy Izuku could feel him trying to contain.

Aizawa nodded, shifting closer and pulling Hitoshi with him until the purple haired boy melded into the huddle, his shoulders relaxing slightly with the closeness. "It's different for every pack, sometimes the connection between members is stronger, sometimes it's weaker, but it's always there. You're going to have to get used to feeling each other, to sensing each other. We have no idea how strong of a connection the nine of you will have since most of you are human, but it's going to be an adjustment regardless. For now, you need to all breathe. You need to calm down because you're all panicking and it's amping everyone up by nine."

"B-but Kaachan," Izuku struggled, fingers tightening around his boyfriend's limp grasp. "He-he… what's wrong with him?"

Aizawa didn't look like he knew the answer as he crouched in front of the group, eyes narrowed at the blonde in the center of all of them. But the queen was quick to take a step forward behind him, her red eyes watching her son in curiosity.

"He is communing," she said quietly, drawing all eyes towards her in confusion.

"Communing," Eijirou frowned, glancing between his best friend and the queen. "Like-like with god?"

"With one of them, yes," she responded, and for some reason the answer seemed to calm the beast of worry raging in Izuku's chest. He watched as the other's calmed slightly as well, but he didn't let up on his grip. "As we've said before, a Kiko is placed- or more accurately is created- for a reason. The Inari has not given a kiko in millennia, but they are always here for a reason. No doubt the Inari is introducing itself to him."

Something weird churned in Izuku's stomach and he frowned, shaking his head. "He isn't going to like that," the greenette mumbled, drawing the queen's eyes. "Kaachan hates being told what to do. He

doesn't believe in destiny or fate or anything like that. If-If they tell him that he's been *made* to do something, he won't want to do it."

The queen snorted at his words though, a look in her eyes that made him feel too much like a foolish child. "That isn't how it works, kid. Katsuki was *made* for their purpose. Technically he has a choice to not do whatever it is they made him for, but he won't *want* to. His morals, his personality, his heart, it was all molded and sculpted for a specific purpose. Whatever the Inari wishes of him, he will gladly do because it's who he is. If the Inari created him for war, then he will be a soldier because he *wants* to be. If the Inari created him for peace, then he will calm those around him because it's in his very soul to do so."

"So what, he has no free will?" Shouto hissed from Katsuki's other side, fingers tightening around where he'd grabbed onto the boy's other hand.

A wave of fear echoed through the greenette and he knew the others could feel it to by the way Hanta pressed up against the dual-haired boy's side and Eijirou pressed up against his back.

"It isn't as simple as free will," the queen said with a shake of her head, frowning. Izuku could tell she was trying to find the best way to explain it to them in a way they might understand. "Take your Satori for example," she told them, gesturing towards Hitoshi who blinked up at her in surprise. "It is in his very nature to find a pack, to protect them and their kitsune. He flocked to you all without question, he bonded himself to Katsuki as if it were completely natural for him. Technically he could chose to leave the pack, he could choose to ignore his nature, but he doesn't *want* to. Katsuki will be roughly the same. Whatever the Inari has tasked him with doing, he will *want* to do. He will have the option to say no, but he simply won't. It isn't in his nature."

"But what-" Mei paused, frowning as she glanced at their fox. "What do they want him to do? What if it's something bad?"

This time Aizawa-sensei answered with a shake of his head. "The Inari is a peaceful kami. As with everyone, there are good kitsune and bad kitsune, but the majority of them lean towards good. Or at the very least, neutral. Kitsune are tricksters, but at the base of it, we all serve the Inari. Kiko's just a little more so." He sighed at their confused expressions and shrugged. "The Inari will not ask him to do anything bad. Whatever it is he was created for, it will be for a good reason."

Izuku frowned at their teacher before glancing up at Katsuki's glowing golden eyes. "But what is it? What do they want him for?"

"That's not for us to know," Mitsuki answered with a shrug of her own. "Whatever it is, you will all need to be ready for it. The bond has been accepted, even with you being humans, which means the Inari has blessed your union. Whatever it has in mind, you will be important aspects of it."

"And if we say no?" Hanta questioned.

But the queen didn't seem bothered as she smirked at them. "You won't. The Inari chose Katsuki for a reason, and he has chosen you. You will not *want* to say no. It's as simple as that."

Before any of the rest of them could say anything, a collective gasp ran through the group, pulled out of their lungs like a punch to the gut. The new marks on their skin glowed a bright white, Katsuki's glowing the brightest- so bright in fact that even the adults needed to shield their eyes from the light. It was hot, like boiling water flooding through their veins but… but it wasn't painful, Izuku realized.

It condensed and surrounded Katsuki's hands like his explosions, sparking and dancing through the air like firefly embers. The gold in his eyes turned a bright, blinding white and they watched in awe as the two tails curled behind him turned white as well, a shimmering hue of iridescence riding over them like ripples in still water.

"Holy shit," Denki breathed, eyes wide and mouth hanging open.

Izuku wasn't faring much better, unable to tear his eyes away as the light zipped from Katsuki's hands up to the mark in the center of his forehead. He could feel his own marks burn in retaliation and a few moments later, to the shock of even the queen, a third tail manifested behind the boy.

As then it was dark.

As if a switch had been flipped, the light disappeared and left them in the gentle darkness of a lantern-lit pagoda. Katsuki's eyes had returned to their normal yokai gold, but settled behind him remained three black and orange tails.

"He truly has been blessed," Mitsuki whispered, the awe evident in her voice even as Izuku refused to look away from his boyfriend.

“Kaachan?” He said quietly, squeezing the boy’s hand again and sparing a glance towards Shouto who looked equally worried when they received no response?

“Is he okay?” Shouto questioned, turning his worried glare towards the adults. “He didn’t glow like that when he got his last tail. It just appeared. Why- why was he glowing?”

Mitsuki frowned at the question and folded her hands in front of her as she thought. “I cannot say for sure. My best guess is that the Inari has given this new tail to him on purpose. Whatever it told him, it wants him to remember it.”

“Or it’s a reward,” Aizawa said with a shrug. “Kitsune earn their tails by milestone. As they grow stronger or older, or if they do something worthy of the Kami’s attention,” he explained and Izuku couldn’t help but glance down at the new marks on his skin that their teacher couldn’t see. “It’s very possible he got the new tail because he’s finally bonded with you. You joked earlier about him receiving his second tail due to the power of friendship, when he finally acknowledge you all as his pack, but it’s not a joke in reality. It’s likely that he considers himself stronger when he is connected to all of you, and in furthering that connection, the Kami has decided he is stronger as well.”

“So basically what you’re saying is that we’re super strong because of the power of friendship,” Denki grinned, “and the Inari is basically Captain Planet?”

Their teacher’s eyes narrowed at the boy in annoyance before he huffed. “I don’t know what that means.”

The electric blonde squawked and thrust his arms out in surprise. “What?! But it’s a classic and you’re old! You should get that reference!”

“He’s also not human, num-nuts,” Hanta scoffed, knocking the boy on the forehead with his knuckle and snorting at the dramatic way Denki crashed back into Mina. “He probably doesn’t even know what Disney is.”

The bickering went on for a while after that and slowly, gradually, Kaachan started to slump. By the time he gently collapsed against Shouto’s chest, his eyes were closed and his breathing evened out enough to tell Izuku he was sleeping off whatever had just happened. Which was both a relief and a bit worrying if he was being honest.

“He used a lot of energy,” Aizawa said quietly, and the greenette glanced up to see the man watching the trio with a small, fond smile. “He was the grounding rod between the nine of you, the connection to the Kami, the yokai, and you. It most likely took a lot out of him. He just needs to rest. Mitsuki was like this for a little while after our own ceremony, though admittedly she didn’t have a grand light show to go with it.”

Knowing that this was relatively normal made Izuku relax a bit, and he felt Shouto relax as well beside him.

Izuku wasn’t used to worrying about Kaachan that often. The blonde had always been the stronger of the two, the one there to protect Izuku and to fight off anyone who gave them trouble. He was loud and brash and wild. Quick to action and ready within a moment’s notice to bare his fanged teeth.

Yet with everything happening recently, Izuku felt like they were carrying Kaachan a lot more than usual. Not that he was complaining! It was nice… being able to help, being the one to care for the blonde. But it still threw the greenette for a loop because he wasn’t quite sure how to help. He wasn’t quite sure what to do. Kaachan had always known what Izuku needed when he was upset or hurt, but now the roles were reversed and Izuku was so out of his depth that he felt like he was drowning at sea with no lifeboat in sight.

He wondered how much of those waters were his own feelings and how much of them were the others.

No doubt everyone felt a little out of their comfort zones recently.

In such a short time they’d all been told the spirit world actually existed, they’d been exposed to demon foxes and death threats from wicked cats. They’d even traveled to another realm! Which… granted, Izuku already knew about the Yokai stuff, but knowing it and experiencing it were two completely different things.

So it was no surprise that they were all a little shell shocked and standing on unsteady feet. It was also no surprise that none of them quite knew where to go from here or what to expect.

Especially when Hideko all but crashed into the Pagoda, her eyes wide and slightly out of breath.

“You need to leave,” she huffed, shoving the doors closed behind her before rushing up towards her mother. The others were already on

their feet, surrounding Katsuki protectively as she drew nearer, though Shouto stayed on the ground and Izuku hovered over them, unsure.

“Hideko,” Mitsuki growled, turning her sharp glare on her daughter. “You were told not to come here.”

“They need to leave,” the younger girl interrupted, shaking her head at her mother’s words. “They aren’t far behind me. I managed to lose them in the halls but we don’t have time.”

Aizawa was on his feet as well, taking the girl’s shoulders in his hands as he attempted to calm her. “Calm down and tell us what’s going on. Who is coming?”

The girl sucked in a deep breath, her red-gold eyes finding her mother’s matching ones.

“The Komainu.”

Lion dog… Hitoshi couldn’t help but growl in the back of his head, trying desperately to ignore the sharp rush of panic and confusion muddling through his brain from the others. He didn’t know much about the yokai, but everyone knew what a Komainu was. Legend says they were guardians, though the expression on Hideko’s face suggested otherwise.

Not that his mind was really functioning one hundred percent at that moment. Maybe there *were* stories about them that he couldn’t remember. Stories telling of them being dangerous.

He was still struggling with maintaining his grip on his own body, having barely registered someone passing him into Denki’s arms the moment Hideko rushed in.

It was there though, the pressing sense of *hunger* that he’d felt with the nekomata and the nogitsune weeks ago. It wasn’t as strong and it was mixed with something akin to anger and disgust, but it was there. The only thing keeping him more grounded than last time was the presence of the others around him, the presence of them in his skin… like the ink etched into them were chains holding them all together.

“Komainu?” Mitsuki growled, her face twisting up in anger and her fists clenching at her sides. “What are *they* doing here? And without notice? It’s disrespectful.”

But Hideko was shaking her head already. “It’s not just- it’s Raoion and his queen,” she said sharply. “They’ve come on their own.”

Hitoshi didn’t know what that meant, but he could tell by the wait the two adults tensed that it couldn’t be good. Not to mention, “they’re almost here,” he said quietly, eyes focused intently on the doors of the pagoda. “I can feel them and… and they aren’t here for a peaceful hello.”

Red eyes turned to purple and the queen frowned. “What are they here for? Can you tell?”

Normally Hitoshi would say no, his quirk didn’t work that way. But his yokai powers? He still wasn’t clear on the extent of those, nor how they mixed so well with his quirk’s abilities. So he concentrated, closing his eyes and letting Denki take the majority of his weight as his legs shook under the force of sensations rushing towards him.

“They’re angry,” he muttered quietly, though the words echoed through the room. “It’s hard to focus on just one emotion, hard to interpret what they’re thinking.”

“Focus on just one of them,” Aizawa instructed, stepping forward to place his hands on either side of the boy’s head. “Ground yourself in your pack and focus on just one of them. Raoion will be the easiest, so focus on him. Don’t try to dig into the emotions individually, just let your gut tell you what they are.”

Denki’s arms were warm around Hitoshi’s waist, his teacher’s hands cold and steady on his face. He could feel the others around him, in him, holding him down. So he took a deep breath and focused. Blocking out everything else and pinpointing the larger of the two bodies storming their way.

The hunger. The anger. The disgust.

“His chest is burning with anger,” the boy began, his own hand raising to clutch at his bare chest. “And it’s like… like he’s disgusted with something but I can’t tell what. It flares and flickers back and forth like he keeps seeing something he doesn’t like.”

He could hear the queen hum and imagined she was nodding along with his words. “Raoion and I have never truly gotten along. Our truce is fragile as their kind and our kind are not entirely… compatible.”

But Hitoshi was shaking his head, prying his metaphorical fingers into the energy of the Komainu king. “It’s more than that though. It’s like… like he’s offended about something. The anger and disgust is all mixed up together, and he’s… he’s looking for something. Something he doesn’t think-“ a sharp image of black tails and orange fire has Hitoshi gasping, a memory of two tails riding the back of the images, and his eyes snap open immediately, drawing himself away from the stranger in the halls and back into Denki’s comforting arms. Mitsuki and Aizawa already look ready to question him but he shakes his head, swallowing sharply. “The nekomata,” he all but spat. “He-he knows about Katsuki because of the nekomata.”

Curses escaped his teacher’s lips and he turned sharply towards the other two kitsune in the room. “He cannot find them. If he knows you’ve bonded a pack of humans and a hybrids, he’ll consider it an act of war.”

“What? But-but that isn’t illegal is it?” Mina asked from where she was pressed up against Eijirou.

“It’s not, but hybrids have been the cause of many wars in the past,” Mitsuki growled. “They are rare and sought after. People want them and now I have two. At least in their minds.”

Aizawa rested a hand on his queen’s shoulder and frowned, his voice too low for the others to hear, but Hitoshi could feel the words on his tongue like it was his own as he spoke. “If the cat told them, then they know what he is.”

The queen nodded in agreement before turning towards her daughter. “Get them out of here. Take them back to the portal and get them home before Raoion sees them.” The girl opened her mouth to argue but Mitsuki cut her off with a sharp glare. “Do this, Hideko. It is for their safety as well as our own. The Inari has blessed our clan with a Kiko and it is our duty to protect him and his. So go open the gate for them and make sure they get through it.”

Distantly, Hitoshi could hear Izuku and Shouto waking their kitsune up behind him. He could feel Denki’s arms tightening around his waist as he began to tug him towards the doors. He could feel the confusion and panic brewing within the pack because they didn’t know what was happening but they knew they needed to get *out*. Aizawa had taken a protective stance in front of them, with Mitsuki at his side, both facing the front doors of the Pagoda in preparation.

But Hitoshi didn't move.

"Hitoshi come on, we have to go," Denki pleaded, tugging on the boy's hand as he tried to drag him away.

Their teacher turned sharply, meeting his eyes when he saw that the other two students weren't leaving, but Hitoshi didn't give him a chance to argue. "I'm staying," he said surely. "I can stop them, I can buy us some time to get out. Buy you some time to figure things out," he said, addressing the last bit to the queen who seemed a bit confused.

"Your quirk doesn't work on our kind," Aizawa shook his head, gesturing towards the doors where Eijirou and Hanta were waiting.

"Trust me," Hitoshi begged, forcing himself not to crumble to his knees as the *hungry angry disgusting* drew closer and closer. "I can do it, please. Trust me. I have to protect them."

There was hesitation there in his teacher's eyes, but Hitoshi knew he'd won. He knew Aizawa had the same feeling in his own gut when standing next to his queen. The need to protect. To provide. To make sure they *survived*. Finally, as the sharp scent of something wild began wafting through the doors, Aizawa nodded and turned away from him.

"I'm staying too," a determined voice said from beside the satori, electricity buzzing through the air as Hitoshi glanced at the blonde.

"Denki no."

"Denki yes."

He wanted to argue, wanted to tell the boy who held his heart to get *out* because what was the point in protecting them like this if they just stuck around anyway. And they *did* stick around, because despite the unknown danger and the words of the adults, he could feel the others in the back of the pagoda waiting for him to follow. Waiting, because if there was anything they'd grown to remember as a pack, was that they wouldn't abandon anyone.

Not to mention the fact that he could *feel* Katsuki's anger from where he was, feel how pissed he was that Hitoshi and Denki hadn't followed.

But he didn't have time to argue now. Didn't have time to send the

others any reassurances.

“They’re here,” Hitoshi breathed only moments before the doors crashed open and two strangers walked in.

He wasn’t sure what he was expecting when Mitsuki had said Komainu, but the King and Queen who sauntered in seemed to slot perfectly into place in his mind with what he’d expected. Their dark skin shimmered gold when the lantern light flickered across their bodies, their hair locked and matted in wild manes, decorated with jewelry and trinkets and beads. Their feet were bare and they wore barely any clothing besides the furs over their waists and shoulders, and Hitoshi could practically *taste* the power wafting off of them.

It was not dissimilar to the power he felt from the kitsune queen.

“Raoion,” Mitsuki said with a sharp grin, her posture all that of a proper royal even if her tone was laced in something that screamed danger. “You’re treading a very dangerous line right now. I was not aware you’d be visiting.”

The man before them simply laughed, throwing his arms out as if expecting an embrace, though he drew no closer. “Mitsuki! A pleasure as always. I was sure I sent my footman ahead to announce our arrival,” he said with false apologies in his voice, raising himself from the bow he offered the woman. “Perhaps something happened to him along the way. My *sincerest* apologies at the inconvenience, but I heard the crowned prince has returned and thought it best to give my condolences.”

“Condolences are usually given upon death,” the blonde responded harshly, but Raoion seemed unphased, even as his own queen stepped up behind him and wrapped her muscled arms around the man.

“Your barbaric tongue escapes me sometimes,” he hummed, shrugging slightly in disregard, but Hitoshi could sense the words were false. “Perhaps I’ve used the wrong word. It hardly matters, we are here now! I’d love to meet the young thing! After all, he will be the one to take the throne when you’ve fallen. It would be good for him to meet his allies!”

The *when* didn’t sit well with Hitoshi, but it seemed to sit even less with his teacher as the man tensed and a low hiss sounded between the man’s teeth.

Raoion’s eyes slid towards him with a raised brow and a smirk slipped

onto his lips, almost as if he was amused by the entire situation. “Ah, and I see your little pet is back home. It’s been a long time, Shouta. How much did you need to beg for Mitsuki to forgive your abandonment to your clan?”

A loud snarl interrupted the man’s taunting and Mitsuki’s tails thrashed behind her in warning. “Watch your tongue, Raoion. The only reason you aren’t dead yet is because you’ve given me no reason to kill you. If you wish to leave today, you will not give me one.”

“Denki,” Hitoshi whispered as the adults argued, purple eyes turning towards gold just long enough for him to know he had the other boy’s attention. Swallowing his embarrassment, he threaded his fingers through Denki’s, clutching at his hand like a lifeline and taking a deep breath. “Last time I did this, it was hard for me to come back,” he mumbled, keeping his voice quiet as he spoke. “If you can’t wake me up, shock me. It should work.”

The other boy didn’t argue, though Hitoshi could tell he wanted to. Instead he grasped at the offered hand and nodded, turning back towards the strangers in wait.

Hitoshi didn’t bother speaking this time. He wasn’t sure why, but for some reason he knew he didn’t need to. At least not to them. Usually his quirk couldn’t even activate without a vocal response, but he also couldn’t usually sense other people until after he asked a question.

This was different.

He could sense *everyone* here in the Ikai. He’d been able to since they’d gotten here. Something about them being yokai and him being a satori, Aizawa had said. Though the teacher thought it might have been stronger due to his quirk and his connection to a kiko. It’d been overwhelming at first, but Hitoshi was- for the most part- able to shove it to the back of his mind. To focus on the pack instead and force himself to breathe.

Now he focused on the Komainu instead.

He barely had to think about it before his mind was lashing out at them, latching on with jagged claws and a wicked grip. Like last time it was almost too easy to gain control. Too easy to erase who used to be there and replace them with himself. He could feel them freeze under his quirk, could feel their minds empty like water from a tipped glass. Their chests rose with his, their hands trembled with his. Their three hearts beat as one.

And for a moment, just one moment, Hitoshi lost himself in it.

He wasn't sure what it was, but there was a blissful silence in his mind where he forgot who he even was. He forgot which body was his and which was the strangers. The hunger and anger and disgust from earlier was gone, replaced by his own worry and bliss and *need*.

The need to protect.

The need to guard.

The need to serve.

The need to *control*.

The smallest of shocks ricocheted through his finger bones and he blinked his eyes open, the world around him blurring slightly as he struggled to focus. Another shock and his eyes trailed towards the boy beside him. His head turned and on the other side of the room, two other heads turned in tandem.

"What is this?" Mitsuki was asking, her voice curious and wary. "What's happening?"

"It's his quirk," Denki answered when Hitoshi only opened his mouths, the words lodged in his three throats as he focused on now drowning. "He can control people's minds. He did it earlier with the nekomata and the uh- the nogitsune. It's how he was able to hold them back until Kaachan got there."

Distantly he was aware that the queen was shaking her head. "Your quirks don't work on our kind."

Denki only shrugged because he had no answers, and Hitoshi remained silent because neither did he. His fingers clenched slightly as the silence tried to pull him back, yanking and yanking until he stumbled on his feet. Across from him the Komainu stumbled as well.

"It's never worked like this though," Aizawa grumbled, his curiosity slipping into worry and confusion as he circled the yokai. "It must be because he's a hybrid. We've never had hybrids with quirks before. This is completely new."

"I can't keep it up," Hitoshi growled out, the words echoed by the voices that spoke with him. He heard Denki mutter '*creepy*' under his breath but ignored it. "It's easy, they're not fighting back on it, but it-I

can't-" he stumbled again, gasping when Denki wrapped his arms around him to hold him up, little pin pricks of electricity serving to ground him back into his own body for a few moments at a time. "I can't tell who is me and who is them," he managed to get out.

Aizawa nodded, glancing towards the queen with a stern look. "Then we need to leave while he still has control."

Mitsuki agreed, waving them on towards the back doors. "I will deal with them once you are gone. Go, quickly. Hideko will open the gates for you. But Shouta," the three of them paused at the door, Denki having to all but carry Hitoshi. "Write me sometime, yeah?"

The man snorted and rolled his eyes, but nodded anyhow before shoving through Hanta and Eijirou, pulling both boys with him as he rushed down the hall.

"You-your majesty," Hitoshi groaned, turning towards the woman. "They'll hold while I'm here, but I don't know how long you'll have when we cross over. They may snap back immediately or they may not. I've never-" he sucked in a sharp breath as another tug flooded his lungs with silence before he drew his head above the surface. "I've never done this before. So-so be ready."

She smiled, nodding at the boy. "Thank you Hitoshi. I am glad you have found my son. Now *go*."

And Hitoshi didn't argue.

Chapter End Notes

I've literally been planning the end of this chapter since they got to the Ikai and I'm FINALLY here! That was fun to write, hope it made enough sense and you enjoyed it!

Drink water and take care of yourselves!

Chapter 35: All Bitch

Chapter Summary

The pack deals with new effects of the bond and All Might finds nine new enemies.

Chapter Notes

THIS CHAPTER IS ALL FOR FUN
I seriously wanted to just throw in a few chapters for fun after the more serious stuff we had in the Ikai. So these next two chapters will just be silly text-fic chapters that take place when everyone gets back. There were some things I wanted to write about but didn't have any ideas on how to deal with them in actual story, so we're doing some text chapters for some fun. :)
I've added all the usernames at the beginning of the chapter but they change around depending on the chat being used so hopefully it isn't too confusing.
If you're not a big fan of text chapters or struggle reading them, feel free to skip to the end for a summary of the important bits that happen this chapter!
Please enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Kaminari Denki – PikaPika, BubblePopElectric, LitchenburgBitch

Shinsou Hitoshi - WhatIsSleep, Braindead, CoffeeAddict2.0

Midoriya Izuku – PapaGreenBean, BushBaby

Midoriya Katsuki – PackMom, BoomBoomPow, HeProtecHeAttac

Todoroki Shouto – DaddyHotPocket, IceIceBaby, SweetSwinterChild

Sero Hanta – ScotchTape, CeloPhane, Spooderman

Kirishima Eijirou – OurPetRock, BabyRiot, RockPaperRiot

Hatsume Mei – 1HourSinceOurLastExplosion, WhoLetHerHaveExplosives, MeiMeiAttack

Ashido Mina – AlienQueen, BubblegumBitch, SlipNslide

Aizawa Shouta - GranDadzawa, EraserDad

Midoriya Inko - GranMommaInko

{PikaPika} has added {Aizawa Shouta} to {The Pack}

{PikaPika} has changed {Aizawa Shouta} to {GranDadzawa}

PikaPika: Okay does anyone else feel super weird?

ScotchTape: weirder than usual you mean? Yeah, feel like I'm about to bounce off the wall

PikaPika: right?! Cuz I feel the opposite! Like I haven't slept in twelve years and am going to fall off my chair any minute

AlienQueen: I'm pretty sure I woke up this morning with a craving for coffee and I HATE coffee soooo

GranDadzawa: I did tell you all that this could happen. You're still settling into your bond.

OurPetRock: Yeah I guess I just expected it to like, go away once we got back from the Ikai?

GranDadzawa*:* You've been back for two days.

PikaPika*:* Yeah but when will it stop being WEIRD?!

GranDadzawa: When you get used to it. Over time the extra sensations and emotions will simply feel like your own.

GranMommaInko: How sweet!

PackMom: It's fuckin' weird. It's like you all don't know how to shut the fuck up.

WhatIsSleep: You'd think you'd be used to that by now. Imagine how I feel with you all in my head even more than usual…

1HourSinceOurLastExplosion: It's very hard to focus on making

babies when you have eight other people inside of you.

PikaPika: …

WhatIsSleep: …

ScotchTape: …

AlienQueen: …

PackMom: What the fuck dreadlocks?

GranMommaInk: Oh my…

GranDadzawa: why am I here?

PapaGreenBean: CONTEXT, MEI MEI! CONTEXT!

DaddyHotPocket: I don't understand. She's speaking of her inventions, is she not?

OurPetRock: I mean yes, but like… it just sounded *__wrong__*

DaddyHotPocket: I still do not understand.

AlienQueen: Oh my sweet summer/winter child. It saddens me how sheltered you are.

DaddyHotPocket: It should not make you sad. Momma Inko has been very kind to shelter me in her home.

GranMommaInko: Sweetheart you are the light of my life. You can stay as long as you like.

ScotchTape: He… he is messing with us right? Like… he's joking?

PapaGreenBean: Unfortunately not. It's okay, I think it's cute

WhatIsSleep: ew gross, I can *__feel__* your love. Get it away from me.

WhatIsSleep: Is it too late to spiritually divorce you?

PackMom: yeah as if we can't feel your gross mushy shit every time you see a certain someone

WhatIsSleep: shut the fuck up bitch

PackMom: Make me bitch

PikaPika: wait, Toshi loves someone?!

GranMommaInko: This is very sweet, but is the language necessary?

OurPetRock: Sorry Granmom, it's pretty par for the course with us XD

ScotchTape: It really is. I heard Izuku curse last week and I'm pretty sure I saw my life flash before my eyes

GranMommaInko: Izuku!

PapaGreenBean: hanta!!! Is nothing sacred???

PackMom: Izu cusses all the time. Ya'll just aren't around to hear it.

DaddyHotPocket: it is true. I find it rather adorable. Like a tiny child saying fuck for the first time.

DaddyHotPocket sent image: [PapaRedBean.png]

DaddyHotPocket: he is blushing. Please enjoy the cuteness.

1HourSinceOurLastExplosion: look at my lil genius baby turning all red!

AlienQueen: IZU YOUR SO CUTE OMGA LDIFJALDKJGHA

ScotchTape: you're*

AlienQueen: a bitch*

OurPetRock: I feel like we've fallen off the original topic.

OurPetRock: **@GranDadzawa** is there a way to learn better control on the whole feeling each other thing?

GranDadzawa: I cannot say for sure with you all since it will most likely be different from what I've experienced. I would suggest pack nights where you practice focusing on which emotions belong to which person. Learning who is who will make it easier to remember which emotions are your own and block out the rest. There's no such thing as privacy when it comes to a bonded pack so get used to being unable to hide most things.

AlienQueen: PACK NIGHT

PikaPika: PACK NIGHT!!!

OurPetRock: PACK NIGHT PACK NIGTH PCAK NIGT

WhatIsSleep: I'm down. Can someone pick me up?

ScotchTape: fuck yeah, I'll bring the games

PackMom: You idiots. we literally have school tomorrow.

1HourSinceOurLastExplosion: Irrelevant our dear mom. Pack night trumps school night.

DaddyHotPocket: He may sound like he is arguing, but he has already begun helping Momma Inko pull out the extra blankets.

PapaGreenBean: Mom said she'll take care of dinner if someone will bring snakcs!

PikaPika: I'm bringing Hitoshi with me so I guess that's me.

ScotchTape: holy fuck that was smooth

OurPetRock: so manly bro

PackMom: disgusting

AlienQueen: Did he even see it?

GranDadzawa sent image: [indenial.png]

DaddyHotPocket: why does he look dead?

PapaGreenBean: to hide the embarrassment. If you look closely you can see how red his ears are

PackMom: fucking hopeless the both of you

WhatIsSleep: I hate you all. Someone get me the spiritual divorce papers

1HourSinceOurLastExplosion: Seriously tho, who's brining snacks?

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PackMom: @GranDadzawa are you awake?

GranDadzawa: unfortunately.

PackMom: check on your kid. He's having a nightmare. It woke us all up but he isn't answering our messages.

GranDadzawa: thank you. Go back to sleep.

***

PikaPika: Do you guys think the rest of the class think we're weird?

AlienQueen: I mean probably, but like, why do you ask?

PikaPika: you know

PikaPika: we call ourselves pack, we only ever hang out with each other, we fox pile after training

PikaPika: and during lunch

PikaPika: and sometimes in class

PackMom: the rest of the class can go fuck themselves and mind their own business

OurPetRock: not manly bro! the others are pretty great! Besides, *__you're__* the one who voted for Momo as class rep

PackMom: because she's the only capable one out of the lot of you idiots

ScotchTape: I mean… that's fair

1HourSinceOurLastExplosion: I like the bubbly girl in your class! She's cute!

PackMom: who?

OurPetRock: Uraraka!

PackMom: I repeat… who?

PikaPika: Bro! You fought her in the sports festival, you don't even remember?

PackMom: Pink cheeks? I don't fuckin' remember names! Why do you idiots think you all have nicknames?

PackMom: she's pretty cool I guess. Stronger than half the people in

our class

PapaGreenBean: Kaachan don't be mean! Everyone in your class is super strong!

PapaGreenBean: and do you really think we're leaving people out **@PikaPika**? I don't want your class to like, feel divided!

PackMom: you aren't even IN our class

PapaGreenBean: yeah but Mei and I are like, honorary members since we work so closely with you guys. Right **@GranDadzawa?**

GranDadzawa: do not drag me into this.

DaddyHotPocket: perhaps we invite them to 'hang out' sometime outside of class? It could make them feel more included.

AlienQueen: OMG CLASS SLUMBER PARTY YAAASSSSS

PikaPika: Daddy you're a gENIUS! CLASS PARTYYYYY!!!!

GranMommaInko: oh my… I am not sure our home is big enough for the entire class. The nine of you are a tight fit already.

1HourSinceOurLastExplosion: My moms said we can have it at our place! We've got a big warehouse garage for our babies and as long as no one touches anything important we can have a sleepover there!

AlienQueen: ummm that kind of sounds dangerous.

OurPetRock: Yeah, I mean, no offense Mei Mei, but I have a feeling your house is like… a time bomb waiting to happen

1HourSinceOurLastExplosion: You're not wrong! :D

GranDadzawa: *__sigh__* if you ask Nezu, he might allow a class slumber party in one of the gyms.

PapaGreenBean: Oh! I got it! **@Overlord**

{Overlord} has entered the chat

Overlord: I think a class slumber party is a wonderful idea! Class bonding is always encouraged and with all you've gone through so far

it would be wonderful to grow stronger together! As long as Aizawa is fine with supervising, it is approved!

{Overlord} has left the chat

ScotchTape: umm… are we going to ignore the fact that no one actually invited him into the chat?

OurPetRock: yeah uh that was pretty scary

AlienQueen: is he just… always there?

PapaGreenBean: Principal Nezu and I have been working on hacking lately! You guys should see my new support gear! It's got a HUD bracer that connects to my visor and everything! When it's done and programmed I'll be able to hack into pretty much anything at my fingertips!

GranDadzawa: I knew I was going to regret letting Nezu meet you.

PikaPika: seriously like, you've basically guaranteed them to take over the world together

ScotchTape: GreenBean for Overlord 20XX

1HourSinceOurLastExplosion: GreenBean for Overlord 20XX

WhatIsSleep: GreenBean for Overlord 20XX

GranDadzawa: in my defense, I'm not technically his teacher. We can blame Power Loader.

DaddyHotPocket: he is now trying to hack into Dadzawa's computer in order to replace all of his student files with cat videos

GranDadzawa: I… would not be opposed to this.

WhatIsSleep: I agree.

PackMom: You're all insane.

***

OurPetRock: DID ANYONE ELSE HEAR THAT?!?!?!?1

PikaPika: hear what?

OurPetRock: I swear on Crimson Riot's grave (not that he will EVER die for he will forever live on in my heart) I heard Pack Mom screaming at me. But like… in my head!

WhatIsSleep: Can confirm. Also heard pack mom screaming. Something about Izuku blowing up the garage again.

PapaGreenBean: IM SORRY

PackMom: THIS IS THE THIRD TIME THIS WEEK AND IT'S ONLY THURSDAY!!!

1HourSinceOurLastExplosion: OOH WHAT ARE YOU MAKING?!?!?!

PackMom: DO NOT ENCOURAGE HIM

GranMommaInko: I'm sorry Hatsume dear, but Izuku has been grounded from home inventing for the rest of the week.

DaddyHotPocket sent image: [cryingoverspiltoil.png]

PikaPika: omg he looks so saaad

AlienQueen: okay like, poor baby, but also look at him. He's so cute with his chubby cheeks and his little pout. I could just eat him up like the snakc he is.

DaddyHotPocket: I feel it's my duty to inform you that Katsuki is growling at his phone.

ScotchTape: Are we going to ignore the fact that at least two pack members were able to hear Kaachan's thoughts from their own homes?

OurPetRock: oh yeah **@GranDadzawa**

GranDadzawa: it's never happened before in a pack, but you guys aren't exactly traditional. It's entirely possible that along with your emotional connections, you'll be able to read each other's minds, or at the very least send each other messages through thoughts. Especially with Hitoshi in the pack. He could be acting as a sort of grounding rod for all of your minds.

WhatIsSleep: why meeeee?

PikaPika: uhhh so like… that's dangerous territory right there. What if I don't *want* people inmy head?

PackMom: we don't want to be in it

PikaPika: rood

GranDadzawa: it all depends on how the connection works. You might not be able to hear each other unless you WANT to, or you might be able to learn how to control when you hear the others.

AlienQueen: does this mean what I think it means?

ScotchTape: Pack night?

PikaPika: Pack NIGHT

GranMommaInko: I will get the blankets out.

OurPetRock: *__wipes tears__* best granmom ever.

***

[Braindead] has created the chat [Pack Pups – No Adults Allowed]

[Braindead] has added [BubblePopElectric] to the chat

[Braindead] has added [BoomBoomPow] to the chat

[Braindead] has added [IceIceBaby] to the chat

[Braindead] has added [WhoLetHerHaveExplosives] to the chat

[Braindead] has added [BushBaby] to the chat

[Braindead] has added [BabyRiot] to the chat

[Braindead] has added [BubblegumBitch] to the chat

[Braindead] has added [CeloPhane] to the chat

Braindead: I have brought you all here today out of the goodness of my kind, benevolent, black heart

BoomBoomPow: how many fucking group chats do we need? You

fucks already added me to the class 1-a chat, and the pack chat, why a third?

Braindead: this chat doesn't have the ADULTS in it

BubblePopElectric: YEAH! NO RULZ

Braindead: no spelling things with a z, Denki

BubblePopElectric: ONE RULE

Braindead: I've added you all to tell you to be prepared for class monday. Dadzawa is bringing in Midnight to discuss our hero names.

BubblegumBitch: OMG HERO NAMESYAAAASSSADFALSDKFJ

BabyRiot: No way! I'm so stoked! I've had my name picked out for ages!

BushBaby: Kaachan's had his picked out since we were kids too!

BoomBoomPow: nope, I've changed it

BushBaby: WHAAAAAAAAAAAAT?! SINCE WHEN?!

BoomBoomPow: Since All Might is a bitch and a half and I refuse to pay homage to his tiny dick.

BabyRiot: oh damn…

BubblegumBitch: when did All Might piss in your cereal?

BubblePopElectric: I feel like there's a story here b/c all Might is like… THE hero bro

IceIceBaby: I do not know the full story, but I know enough as well to dislike All Might.

WhoLetHerHaveExplosives: so what you're saying is he did something to Izuku and now you both hate him…

WhoLetHerHaveExplosives: I can blow him up for you…

BushBaby: DO NOT BLOW UP THE NUMBER ONE HERO OMG PLS

BushBaby: It's really not a big deal, I promise and it was a while ago. I doubt he even really remembers it

BoomBoomPow: Oh he remembers. I chewed him out for it

BushBaby: YOU WHAT?!

CeloPhane: is this something we need to know? Because I'm not opposed to taping him to the ceiling if needed

BabyRiot: Yeah like… he's a hero and all but like, no one hurts our bush baby

BubblegumBitch: Can you put acid in coffee?

BushBaby: All Might doesn't drink coffee.

BushBaby: and I promise I'm mostly over it. It's not that big of a deal and I've already proven him wrong so-

Braindead: You just casually know that AM doesn't drink coffee?

BoomBoomPow: if you were over it, you'd have told me what happened by now.

Braindead: shit… it must have been bad if you didn't even tell Kaachan

IceIceBaby: Izuku is upset now. Please stand by while we comfort him.

BubblegumBitch: Oh baby! You don't have to tell us! It's okay!

WhoLetHerHaveExplosives: I'll still blow him up.

***

[MeiMeiAttack] has created the chat [ProtectBabySquad]

[MeiMeiAttack] has added [CoffeeAddict2.0]

[MeiMeiAttack] has added [HeProtecHeAttac]

[MeiMeiAttack] has added [RockPaperRiot]

[MeiMeiAttack] has added [LitchenbergBitch]

[MeiMeiAttack] has added [SlipNslide]

[MeiMeiAttack] has added [Spooderman]

[MeiMeiAttack] has added [SweetSwinterChild]

MeiMeiAttack: We must protect the bush baby with our lives

SlipNSlide: at the risk of expulsion, I WILL STAB A BITCH

Spooderman: guy's we still don't know what happened

CoffeeAddict2.0: irrelevant

MeiMeiAttack: irrelevant

LitchenbergBitch: ^^^

CoffeeAddict2.0: I asked GranDadzawa and he doesn't know anything about it

RockPaperRiot: so wha… we just wait till Zuku tells us?

Spooderman: that would be the right thing to do…

MeiMeiAttack: NO! WE NEED JUSTICE!

HeProtecHeAttac: you're all dumbasses. Izuku told us what happened.

SweetSwinterChild: He's asleep now from all the crying and yelling, but we've been given permission to tell you all what happened.

MeiMeiAttack: I am preparing my workshop now. If I need to kill All Might, I'm sure I can find a way.

Spooderman: maybe wait until we know wha happened

LitchenbergBitch: Shit mom's typing a lot… is it really that bad? Like… he's the number one hero. He's always so NICE!

CoffeeAddict2.0: he is a bit of an idiot tho in class

MeiMeiAttack: would not know

SlipNslide: yeah he's kind of dumb. Like, you can tell he's trying but he's just real bad at it

HeProtecHeAttac: okay listen up bitches because I will not repeat anything. Zuku was bullied a lot when we were younger because kids

are jackasses who can't see further than their own fucking noses and thought that since he was quirkless it meant he was WEAK. Which is dumb as fuck b/c I wouldn't associate myself with weaklings. Anyway, he's always had it in his dumb head that he couldn't be a good hero because he didn't have a quirk and even tho I TOLD him over and over again he could, he fucking didn't believe me.

HeProtecHeAttac: so last year sometime after school he got bullied real bad before I could stop it and we walked home separately. Izuku ends up getting attacked by that sludge villain like an hour before it attacked me and All Might shows up to save him. At the time, All Bitch was Zuku's favorite hero like, ever. No joke, he had All Bitch bed sheets, and pajamas, and figurines. Hell, our shower curtain had him on it since as long as I can remember.

RockPaperRiot: Dedication.

Spooderman: Like you have room to talk. You have Red Riot curtains.

MeiMeiAttack: let him finish!

HeProtecHeAttack: well being the fuckin nerd he is, the dumbass decides to latch onto All Bitch as he runs off (WITHOUT checking if Izuku was okay or taking him to medical or fucking anything he SHOULD HAVE DONE). They end up on a roof where Izuku asks HIS HERO if he could be a hero without a quirk.

RockPaperRiot: oh no…

Spooderman: he didn't…

LitchenbergBitch: I'm legit about to cry right now

HeProtecHeAttac: yeah the bitch told him NO. Said it was too dangerous and some other shit that Sho and I aren't allowed to tell you. But the point is he said NO and that Izuku should look at a more 'realistic' job like being a cop or a doctor or some shit as if he doesn't know how hard it is for quirkless people to get jobs in the first place.

SlipNslide: I'll kill a bitch

MeiMeiAttack: I'll help

SweetSwinterChild: he's not done

LitchenbergBitch: THERES MORE?! HOW CAN THERE BE MORE

HeProtecHeAttac: yeah so then, All Bitch leaves Izuku ON THE ROOF BY HIMSELF and tells him to "just knock on the door and someone will let you down" even though it would have taken him less than a SECOND to do it HIMFUCKINGSELF. So Izuku has to get down on his own and still walk home after just being nearly suffocated by a villain. (and let me tell you, momma inko was PISSED when she found out the next day and dragged us both to the hospital for check ups). Anyway, he ends up hearing my explosions and like a fucking HERO he comes to rescue me from the sludge bitch

SlipNslide: I saw the video! He threw his backpack at the guy!

RockPaperRiot: it was super manly.

LitchenbergBitch: much inspire

Spooderman: so cool

HeProtecHeAttac: and All Bitch shows up again and rescues the both of us because all the other heroes were standing around doing jack shit while a quirkless kid rescues me. And since he's mad at All bitch, Zuku makes a run for it after making sure I get to the ambulance for a check over and runs home BY HIMSELF because he's an idiot. And All Bitch stops him and has the AUDACITY to say Izuku showed the heart of a true hero and a bunch of bullshit that we already knew. Some more things were said that we aren't allowed to tell you, but basically he was all "listen kid, you CAN be a hero… BUT ONLY WITH MY HELP!"

SweetSwinterChild: And Izuku said "no thanks".

HeProtecHeAttac: Yeah, b/c he knows now that he can be a hero on his fucking OWN without All Might's help or approval. So he tells the bitch no because he wants to be able to do it on his own b/c he knows he can an dhe leaves and comes home and takes down all his merch and hid away his SIGNED notebook b/c All Bitch fucking broke his heart and then had the audacity to try to say only HE could fix it.

SweetSwinterChild: so long story short we do not 'stan' All Might

HeProtecHeAttac: All Bitch*

SweetSwinterchild: my apologies. we do not stan All Bitch *

Spooderman: first of all… that's fucked up… second of all, I'm so proud of Shouto for using stan correctly in a sentence

SweetSwinterChild: I am a meme lord, you have simply been free from my power thus far

MeiMeiAttack: okay we can come back to that later. Right now we need a plan

HeProtecHeAttac: izuku made us promise not to kill the bitch because while he doesn't like him anymore, he still respects him as a hero for some dumb reason

LitchenbergBitch: yeah BUT like… hear me out… just a bunch of minor inconveniences can add up you know? Just some itty bitty teeny weenie pranks here and there as a sort of… revenge, you know? but like, that go on for WEEKS and he never realizes who it is doing it.

MeiMeiAttack: OMG YES GENIUS

SlipNslide: I'm so in for this I have so many ideas

RockPaperRiot: it's not manly to shit on people's dreams.

SweetSwinterChild: pranks and inconveniences were not forbidden

HeProtecHeAttac: let's fucking make his days hell

Spooderman: he will rue the day he hurt the bush baby

CoffeeAddict2.0: I'm down for this plan but I highly suggest we include GranDadzawa in it so we don't all get expelled

MeiMeiAttack: worth

SlipNslide: worth

[SweetSwinterChild] has added [EraserDad] to the chat

SweetSwinterChild: **@EraserDad** please read the above conversation

Spooderman: dude… did you really just add him?

SweetSwinterChild: I thought it the most logical course of action

SweetSwinterChild: Plus I feel like he will also be upset at the number one hero's actions.

CoffeeAddict2.0: Eraserhead is a spiteful bitch and will 100% support our cause. As long as he's aware of it.

CoffeeAddict2.0: Please don't ground me for calling you a spiteful bitch.

LitchenbergBitch: ADKFJADKGHAFG TOSHI YOU JUST CALLED OUR TEACHER A BITCH

CoffeeAddict2.0: he did adopt me, so like… I feel like I have the right as his cat son

SlipNslide: OMG I JUST REALIZED THAT DADZAWA IS LITERALLY A CAT DAD. LIKE NOT ONLY DOES HE HAVE CATS BUT LIKE HE *__IS__* A CAT!!!!!!!!!!

LitchenbergBitch: LKDSJF;AOISHDGAJHG yaaaaaaaaaaaaaas

HeProtecHeAttac: you're all dumbasses.

CoffeeAddict2.0: this just in. CatDad is PISSED. And so is LoudDad because Cat dad told him what happened.

MeiMeiAttack: good. More soldiers for our cause

RockPaperRiot: do we have permission to follow through with the plan?

EraserDad: no killing the number one hero

SweetSwinterChild: that leaves a lot of options still open

EraserDad: No maiming or seriously injuring

SweetSwinterChild: less options...

Spooderman: careful shouto you're sounding a bit villainous

SweetSwinterChild: I would kill for both of my partners

SlipNslide: omg so romantic

SlipNslide: and kind of worrying... but mostly romantic

EraserDad: you have mine, Present Mic's, and Nezu's approval to follow through as long as no one is seriously injured and it does not take away from your school work.

LitchenbergBitch: can we count it as extra credit for stealth training?

Spooderman: dude yes

HeProtecHeAttac: first good idea you've ever had

EraserDad: if you don't get caught, yes. I will consider it extra credit.

RockPaperRiot: should we tell everyone else in class so they can get extra credit as well? I feel like it's not very fair if we don't

MeiMeiAttack: what about me? I'm not in your class!

HeProtecHeAttac: telling the others means we'd have to tell them about Izuku adn he won't be okay with that

EraserDad: I will discuss with the class tomorrow some options for extra credit. I'll allow them to decide how to go about their own stealth training and I'll inform the other teachers that it's happening. (Besides All Might).

HeProtecHeAttac: All Bitch*

EraserDad: Consider this an extra obstacle. You will receive the most points if you are not caught by me, minor points for not getting caught by other teachers, and no points if you get caught by All Might.

HeProtecHeAttac: All Bitch*

EraserDad: Nezu does not count, as he's all knowing and you can't possibly do anything without him seeing it.

LitchenbergBitch: and if we DO succeed without Nezu knowing?

EraserDad: if you have proof that you did something without Nezu finding out I will personally award you an A in my class for the rest of the year

MeiMeiAttack: What about MEEEEEE

EraserDad: I just got off the phone with PowerLoader. While he and the other teachers are not aware of what happened to warrant this extra credit assignment, he has agreed to allow it. You'll receive points if you are able to use your inventing in some way to spite All Might. (Bitch*) Do NOT blow him up or you will be expelled. That goes for all of you.

SweetSwinterChild: do we loose points if Izuku finds out?

EraserDad: Considering your new connections through the bond and the fact that none of you can keep a secret, then it'd be counter productive as I give it maybe a day before he knows.

RockPaperRiot: that's fair

Spooderman: This is going to be the best assignment ever omg

SlipNslide: okay but what IF we decide to fuck with All Bitch like, as a group or something because Toshi and I have some great ideas and it's technically not like, stealthy on purpose

CoffeeAddict2.0: but fucking hilarious

EraserDad: I will consider them depending on the results of the inconvenience/prank. Your teachers will as well. Consider it teamwork building.

LitchenbergBitch: this is the best day of my life omg

HeProtecHeAttac: fuckin' bet

SweetSwinterChild: For those of you curious, Hitoshi and Izuku both have blueprints for the vent systems in all UA buildings.

Spooderman: uhh... why am I not surprised?

EraserDad: I'm leaving the chat before you discuss anymore or else the 'stealth' portion of this assignment will be counter productive. Good luck.

[EraserDad] has left the chat

CoffeeAddict2.0: Let the games begin.

***

PapaGreenBean: Sorry everyone for like... ghosting you guys this weekend.

PikaPika: bro don't even worry! The Mates kept us up to date on how you were doing

PackMom: don't fucking call us that you weirdo

PikaPika: but that's what you are?

OurPetRock: Can we talk about how cool our hero names are PLEASE?! Because we all be rockin!

PikaPika: yeah! Toshi your name is so cool! I can't wait to get a hoodie one day with '**Violet Haze**' across it! It sounds like a band name or something. super dope

WhatIsSleep: uh... thanks... but I'll probably be underground so I won't have much merch

PikaPika: bitch, i'll custom order it or something! Or make it myself. Gotta represent the pack!!!

AlienQueen: Shoutout to @**GranDadzawa** for letting me keep Alien Queen despite what Midnight said! I didn't really like Pinky

PackMom: yeah and letting me have Ground Zero because Midnight is WRONG. It's a fucking GREAT name.

GranDadzawa: it's your name. you should be happy with what you choose. You'll have it for the rest of your lives.

ScotchTape: didn't Present Mic choose your name sensei?

GranDadzawa: how did you know that?

DaddyHotPocket: Izuku knows all. Also Present Mic told us during English today. But Izuku already knew it.

PapaGreenBean: Only because I asked earlier this year! I was working on my Eraserhead analysis in my notebook and Nezu let me into the old school files and I found it!

1HourSinceOurLastExplosion: it's amazing how much power the principal gives you

GranDadzawa: We will not discuss this.

PapaGreenBean: And you all have such cool names! Nezu said I can choose a name too since I specifically want to be a support hero, but I haven't really figured it out yet.

WhatIsSleep: yeah but Shouto literally jsut went with his name and when Midnight tried to get him to change it he refused

PikaPika: yeah what was with that bro? You said it was personal

DaddyHotPocket: During the sports festival Katsuki told me to be my own hero and make my own name for myself instead of letting my garbage fire of a father do it for me. He told me that people should see my fire and know it's me instead of Endeavor. That I should take what I have and create myself. So I am creating who I want to be. Just me. Shouto.

WhatIsSleep: well shit

AlienQueen: okay like, I JUST did my makeup, I did not need these tears rn

PikaPika: that's the most romantic thing I've ever read holy shit are we literally in a romance manga right now?

OurPetRock: so manly... you'll be a great hero Shouto!!!

GranMommaInko: oh sweetheart that's beautiful

PapaGreenBean sent image: [KatsukiSimps.png]

PapaGreenBean: Kaachan literally just stormed into the room and started viciously making out with Shouchan.

PapaGreenBean: we didn't know that's why he chose that name.

PapaGreenBean: I don't think he expected that to be the reason honestly

1HourSinceOurLastExplosion: hawt

AlienQueen: okay wow like, can we calm it down until we get this bond under control because um... it's getting hot over here and I'm trying to focus on homework

PikaPika: yeah uhhh we can literally feel how turned on you guys are

GranDadzawa: I don't get paid enough for this...

GranMommaInko: oh my...

WhatIsSleep: **@PapaGreenBean** MAKE THEM STOP FOR THE LOVE OF KAMI I AM EATING DINNER WITH MY FAMILY ADLKFHAKGH

WhatIsSleep: in other news, Loud Dad is having a fuckign ball right now and won't stop laughing and Cat Dad is hitting his head against the table so...

ScotchTape: I don't know if i'll be able to look Dadzawa in the eyes tomorrow...

PapaGreenBean: sorry guys! Mom came in and broke them apart!

PackMom: fuckin losers are just jealous you're all single. Live vicariously through us you scrubs

AlienQueen: HoW dArE

PackMom: I DARE! COME AT ME YOU RACCOON FACED BITCH

AlienQueen: OH YOU'RE ON! just wait until Eiji finally asks me out! You'll be wishing I was still single!

OurPetRock: O.O

ScotchTape: called OUT

PikaPika: FINALLY JFC

OurPetRock: wait... what?!

1HourSinceOurLastExplosion: did you not know you guys were in love?

OurPetRock: We aren't dating tho???

AlienQueen: *yet*

DaddyHotPocket: I thought you guys had been dating since middle school. That's when Eijirou first had a crush on Mina.

OurPetRock: SHOUTO!!! I TOLD YOU THAT IN CONFIDENCE!!!

AlienQueen: aww baaaabe! You liked me in middle school?

OurPetRock: you were just so manly standing up to that villain! I wouldn't be at UA if it wasn't for you

AlienQueen: Open your window, I'm sneaking in

ScotchTape: this is the most romantic night ever. Not too late for one more couple to get together

PikaPika: oh! Does Mei like someone!?

ScotchTape: ...

1HourSinceOurLastExplosion: ...

GranDadzawa: ...

PackMom: fucking useless

PapaGreenBean: much innocent. such naive.

WhatIsSleep: I don't get it.

ScotchTape: I just... give up.

Chapter End Notes

Public Service Announcement:
I do actually love Katsuki's name "Dynamight" because it's a call out to how much of a simp he is for All Might. BUT I stuck with Ground Zero for the sake of this story simply because it doesn't fit my plot for him to name himself after All Might. I also disagree with Midnight SO HARD because Alien Queen is WAY better than Pinky.
Next chapter will be another text chapter and then we're back on our regularly scheduled bullshit. :) Don't worry, we are going to get to see the pranks and inconveniences play out next chapter!

SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT BITS:
- The pack starts being able to feel each other's emotions and sense each other
- The pack is able to sort of read each other's minds but are unclear of how it works or how deep the mind reading goes
- Everyone finds out what really happened between All Might and Izuku (though the OFA stuff is edited out b/c it's still a secret. Only Katsuki and Shouto know now)
- The pack and Dadzawa want revenge on All Might because he's

a BITCH so they decide to slightly inconvenience him throughout the school day and prank him. Dadzawa decides to consider it stealth training and offers extra credit if they get away with it. The other teachers are on board.
- The kiddos discuss their hero names of which the following are decided
- Katsuki chose 'Ground Zero'
- Mina chose 'Alien Queen'
- Hitoshi chose ' Violet Haze'
- Shouto chose 'Shouto'
- Shouto talks about why he chose Shouto because of Katsuki's speech to him during the sports festival about "creating himself" and it gets all romantic
- Mina drops the fact that her and Eijirou will date soon and he's confused and flustered and it's cute as shit
- Denki and Hitoshi are blissful idiots

Drink your water and eat something!

Chapter 36: All Bitch 2.0

Chapter Summary

The Prank wars begin.

Chapter Notes

Part two of the text chat chapters. This was honestly so much fun to write. Hope you guys enjoy it!
If you want to skip to the end, feel free! I'll add a summary of the events so you don't have to read this chapter if text fics are difficult for you. :)

IMPORTANT NOTE:
I am fudging with the time line a lot because in the canon timeline SO MUCH HAPPENS like back to back and there is no breathing room. So I'm spreading it out a little bit. So there's like, a month between the sports festival and when internships start. Just FYI.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Aizawa Shouta - WhyAmIHere, Dadzawa

Yamada Hizashi - PresentationMichael

Kayama Nemuri - NapTime

Toshinori Yagi - SmallMight

Shuzenuji Chiyo - ALiteralBlessing

Nezu - Overlord

Ishiyama Ken - CementossMeOutAWindow

Ectoplasm - HauntThisBitch

Snipe - RootinTootinShootin

Kan Sekijiro - BewareItBites

Maijima Higari - HatsumesKeeper

Inui Ryo – WhoLetTheDogOut

Midoriya Izuku – ProblemChild

[WhyAmIHere] has created the chat **[Beware Class 1-A]**

[WhyAmIHere] has added **[PresentationMichael]**

[WhyAmIHere] has added **[ALiteralBlessing]**

[WhyAmIHere] has added **[CementossMeOutAWindow]**

[WhyAmIHere] has added **[WhoLetTheDogOut]**

[WhyAmIHere] has added **[HatsumesKeeper]**

[WhyAmIHere] has added **[BewareItBites]**

[WhyAmIHere] has added **[NapTime]**

[WhyAmIHere] has added **[RootinTootinShootin]**

[WhyAmIHere] has added **[HauntThisBitch]**

[WhyAmIHere] has added **[Overlord]**

RootinTootinShootin: I… feel like the name of this chat is very ominous…

HauntThisBitch: shouldn't we ALL beware of your class Eraser?

WhyAmIHere: I have brought you all here today out of the goodness of my kind, benevolent, black heart.

WhoLetTheDogOut: this is not at all concerning

HatsumesKeeper: I already know why we're here and unfortunately for the rest of you, Nezu has already said he will not be accepting any resignations for the rest of the month.

NapTime: WHY WOULD WE NEED TO KNOW THAT?!?!?!

PresentationMichael: Don't worry guys! It won't affect us very much!!!

WhyAmIHere: My class has been offered extra credit in the form of stealth training and missions. They've all chosen their own assignments of how to go about stealth training, but it is the Pack I am informing you of specifically.

ALiteralBlessing: should I be getting my beds ready?

WhyAmIHere: No. They have been strictly informed that there is no death, maiming, or injury allowed in their plans. Accidental or otherwise.

ALiteralBlessing: I thank you for that, dear.

BewareItBites: then what are we here for? What is the pack's assignment?

WhyAmIHere: to fuck with All Might.

NapTime: oh fuck yes I'm so here for this omg Let me get my wine

HauntThisBitch: I feel like there is some context we are missing here.

RootinTootinShootin: I have noticed them all whispering today in the hallways.

CementossMeOutAWindow: it is just specifically the 'pack' that is in on this?

WhyAmIHere: All Might did something stupid and the kids are rightfully very upset at him. However, in getting revenge while still remaining hero students, they have decided to go about getting back at him in… interesting ways.

RootinTootinShootin: Again… ominous.

WhyAmIHere: They will be pranking or minorly inconveniencing All Might for the next few weeks before their internships begin. I am informing you of this because you'll help me tally their scores by the end of the month.

NapTime: Cool cool cool what do you need us to do?

WhyAmIHere: there is a three tier system for this assignment. The students will receive 2 extra credit points for not being caught by me,

1 extra point for not getting caught by any of you, and no points if they get caught by All Might. This will be based per prank/ inconvenience and they must have proof that something has been done (IE pictures, video, etc. though I imagine we'll hear about it from All Might himself as well.)

PresentationMichael: They're also getting one point for each prank/ inconvenience where they work together, even if it isn't stealthy! So feel free to play along or assist if they ask you to! We're considering it teamwork building!

WhyAmIHere: and I may have promised them that if they got away with any pranks whatsoever without Nezu knowing that they'd get an A in my class for the rest of the year. Kaminari is very determined.

Overlord: How exciting!!!

CementossMeOutAWindow: this sounds very chaotic…

HauntThisBitch: especially with your particular class…

BewareItBites: I'm so glad they aren't my class tbh

ALiteralBlessing: May I ask what All Might did to deserve this?

WhyAmIHere: he is an idiot and we aren't allowed to kill him so this is the best we can do.

PresentationMichael: So we have not been given permission to give the full story, but suffice it to say that All Might said some not so heroic things to Sho's little bush baby.

WhyAmIHere: he's not MY bush baby. If anything he's Maijima's.

HatsumesKeeper: nah, that kid is yours. I'm like the cool uncle who has partial custody or something. That kid adores you.

PresentationMichael: babe, those kids literally call you Dadzawa. Your name in the group chat is Grandadzawa. He's your bush baby.

NapTime: akdjfahgagv oh my GOD WHAT

NapTime: THAT IS THE CUTEST THING I'VE EVER HEARD OMG

CementossMeOutAWindow: this is very cute, I will admit.

HatsumesKeeper: Just for note, Hatsume will be involved as well for

the assignment as she's a member of the pack… but I can't promise no one will get hurt with her around.

ALiteralBlessing: *__sigh__* I'll get the cots ready just in case.

HatsumesKeeper: I'd say sorry but… she's just so enthusiastic and I'm high key so proud of her all the damn time

NapTime: omg he's legit crying right now in the lounge. What a proud dad.

NapTime sent an image: [proudpapa.png]

HauntThisBitch: Can we get back to what happened to Midoriya?

RootinTootinShootin: I too would like to know more if we're allowed. All Might is a bit dumb, but he would never knowingly harm a child.

WhyAmIHere: brb

NapTime: where's he GOING?!!>?

PresentationMichael: he's asking the bush baby if he's allowed to tell us.

***

[Dadzawa] has requested a Private Message

Dadzawa: has the pack told you the plan for the rest of the month yet?

ProblemChild: yeah… I'm really sorry about this, sensei! I didn't know they were going to do this! They were just all so worried and I didn't want them to hate All Might because he's such a good hero and it was a while ago that it happened and they told me you knew which is fine I don't mind but I don't want them to get in trouble because of me or anything

Dadzawa: why am I not surprised you ramble in text as well…

Dadzawa: it's fine, problem child. They've been given permission to go on with their plan as long as no one is hurt. You are welcome to go along with it as well. Extra credit points are being offered.

ProblemChild: oh yeah! That's so sweet of you to offer that to them! I uh… I don't think I'll participate if that's okay. I really just want to put all this behind me. I'm here to prove to him that he's wrong, you know? I'm uh- I'm not good at being spiteful

ProblemChild: when it comes to myself at least

Dadzawa: at least you're self-aware

Dadzawa: listen kid. I had to tell the other teachers (other than All Might) about the assignment for safety reasons and so they can keep tally of points. They want to know what happened for AM to deserve this. All Mic and I told them was he wasn't very heroic and he hurt you but they want to know more. I won't tell them if you don't want me to.

ProblemChild: oh… uh- why?

Dadzawa: why what?

ProblemChild: why do they want to know? Like… it wasn't that big of a deal. Why is everyone so upset?

Dadzawa: Because they care about you, problem child. What All Might said was wrong. VERY wrong. Even if he believed you couldn't be a hero, he could have told you that you could at least try. Being quirkless puts you at a severe disadvantage. It's true. I'm not going to tell you that it will be easy or that it isn't going to suck most of the time. You'll have to work ten times harder than everyone else. But you're already on the right track. You've found your analysis and your support skills to make up for your lack of quirk. I have no doubt you'll be the world's first quirkless hero and shove All Might's words right back into his damn throat.

Dadzawa: point is, every teacher who works here supports you and believes in you. Mic and I are PISSED at what he said and the damn buffoon will be getting an earful about it. But whether you tell the other teachers or not, they all will support you because you deserve it.

Dadzawa: you have potential, kid.

Dadzawa: kid?

ProblemChild: this is Katsuki. Izu is crying and can't see his screen so he told us to tell you that you can tell the other teachers as long as they don't make a big deal out of it.

ProblemChild: also if you make my boyfriend cry again I'll fucking blow your face off you damn sap.

ProblemChild: and thanks or whatever… for telling him all that shit.

***

WhyAmIHere: I've been given permission to tell you what happened.

PresentationMichael: I assume that's why three of my students are currently missing from my class?

WhyAmIHere: I may have given the problem child a talking to and now he's having a probably much needed meltdown. His boyfriends are with him.

Overlord: Midoriya is just fine! Do not worry! The three younglings are hiding out in the extra support lab right now.

NapTime: we have an EXTRA support lab?

HatsumesKeeper: it's basically just for Midoriya and Hatsume. They get a little too chaotic to have around the rest of the class so often and both of them make so much shit that it takes up the entire room. I figured it best to just give them their own space.

NapTime: what a proud dad

CementossMeOutAWindow: can we stay on topic please?

BewareItBites: yeah I want to know what All Might did?

WhyAmIHere: I won't tell you all the details because it is not my story to tell. During the sludge villain attack earlier this year, both Midoriyas were attacked, but Izuku was attacked first. All Might rescued him and before he left the kid asked him if he could be a hero even if he didn't have a quirk. All Might said no based on the fact that he could barely defeat AFO on his own.

PresentationMichael: AND THEN HE LEFT A 14 YEAR OLD CHILD ON THE ROOF OF A BUILDING AFTER BEING ATTACKED BY A VILLAIN THAT WAS *__IN THE SEWERS__* WITHOUT MAKING SURE HE WAS OKAY OR TAKING HIM TO THE FUCKING HOSPITAL. AND HE TOLD HIM TO 'KNOCK ON THE DOOR AND SOMEONE WILL LET YOU DOWN' EVEN THOUGH IT WOULD HAVE TAKEN HIM TWO SECONDS TO DO IT HIMSELF.

WhyAmIHere: Also that. Then after Izuku ran in to rescue Katsuki later, All Might caught up to him and offered to train him personally to be a hero.

PresentationMichael: and like the brave, perfect little boy he was, Zuzu said NO because he wants to prove All Might wrong!

NapTime: I'll kill a bitch

RootinTootinShootin: Eraser, don't you basically fight quirkless? Especially against mutant types?

WhyAmIHere: Yes. You see why I am angry.

BewareItBites: jeez… so many heroes have 'weak' quirks or quirks that don't help them in fights and they're still fine. Hell, All Might's own former sidekick had to learn how to be a hero without his quirk because it's a mental quirk that only helps under certain circumstances.

WhoLetTheDogOut: Do you think I should talk to him? If you said his breakdown was much needed, he might not be dealing with the trauma of that day at all.

WhyAmIHere: That actually might be a good idea. He said some rather worrying stuff when I asked him if I could tell all of you. He didn't seem to understand why we cared, nor why it was such a big deal that All Might was wrong.

WhoLetTheDogOut: Yes, I think I will definitely talk to him then. At least to extend the offer, let him choose to take it or not.

WhyAmIHere: I'll put you in contact with his mother. I'm sure she would appreciate it.

NapTime: Tell the kids I am 1000% ready to help them fuck this mans shit up.

WhyAmIHere: noted. Obviously do not tell All Might about this.

***

[UA Faculty chat]

SmallMight: I have a question.

NapTime: what's up small guy?

SmallMight: has there been a villain attack that I am unaware of?

WhyAmIHere: No. why?

SmallMight: I have arrived at my class and it seems that all of my students are… missing.

RootinTootinShootin: Missing?

CementossMeOutAWindow: What do you mean missing?

SmallMight: Well I came into class as usual and well…

Small Might: all of their desks are empty and there are only small dolls in their likeness sitting on their desk tops.

SmallMight sent an image: [image.png]

NapTime: OMG THEYRE SO CUTE THO CAN I HAVE THEM!?

SmallMight: You cannot keep them if they are our students! I am taking them to Recovery Girl!

ALiteralBlessing: oh my…

WhoLetTheDogOut: I'm not aware of any villains infiltrating the school. Could it be a student's quirk?

HauntThisBitch: not that I'm aware of.

SmallMight: I… am very confused. I've just returned to my classroom and all the students are… here…

WhyAmIHere: So they aren't missing?

SmallMight: It appears not. They are all very confused as to where I was and I am getting a lecture from young Iida about the importance of being on time to class.

WhyAmIHere: maybe you should listen to him.

***

[Beware Class 1-A]

NapTime: OH MY GOD THIS IS FUCKING GOLD

Naptime: seriously though @**ALiteralBlessing** can I keep those dolls?

They're adorable.

ALiteralBlessing: You may if you like. Though the pack has been claimed by Aizawa and Mic already. You may have the rest of the class however.

NapTime: fuck yes. What a way to begin this assignemtn. They got the whole calss in on it!

CementossMeOutAWindow: is the entire class aware of what happened to the youngest Midoriya?

PresentationMichael: No, just the pack. But they were happy to play along I think.

HauntThisBitch: even Iida?

WhyAmIHere: This is being counted as Iida's extra credit assignment. He gets one point for every prank/inconvenience he sees and does not report or interfere with and two points for every one he participates in. It was only after that, and a written and signed paper stating that I am explicitly giving the students permission to do this that he agreed.

WhoLetTheDogOut: I am proud of him for taking this opportunity! We've been working on his communication skills and his attempts at being more open and welcoming to fun.

PresentationMichael: It's working! The kids said he barely put up a fight. They were all talking about it in my class! (In English of course or else I'd be a horrible teacher!)

NapTime: what I wouldn't give to have seen his face omg

Overlord has sent a video: [Inconvenience1.vid]

NapTime: Have I ever told you you're my favorite overlord?

PresentationMichael: OML YESSSSS

HatsumesKeeper: That was quite entertaining. Young Iida was very vigilent in returning everyone in a quick and timely manner.

WhyAmIHere: I think the only reason they allowed that was because he was actually agreeing to participate.

RootinTootinShootin: If it works, it works.

***

[UA Faculty Chat]

BewareItBites: uh yo @**SmallMight** any idea why the entire hero hallway is covered in posters of your face with sharpie mustaches and googly eyes on them?

SmallMight: I… do not know… I have seen them as well…

BewareItBites: okay cool.

***

[Beware Class 1-A]

BewareItBites: WHO DID IT PLEASE TELL ME SO I CAN GIVE THEM A HIGH FIVE

WhyAmIHere: Hitoshi and Kaminari.

BewareItBites: Can I come into your classroom right now and give them high fives PLEASE

NapTime: LMFAO OMG I haven't stopped laughing

CementossMeOutAWindow sent an image: [confusedmight.png]

WhoLetTheDogOut: he looks so confused and like, generally distressed.

HatsumesKeeper: I kid you not… Hatsume BUILT A NEW PRINTER specifically for the boys so they could get this all done in one night.

HauntThisBitch: how did they get on campus?

Overlord: I gave them permission to be on campus after hours on the condition that the youngest Midoriya be the one to get him in. He is working on his hacking skills. I of course was here to supervise in case anything went wrong.

BewareItBites: I fear the day when Midoriya the youngest graduates Nezu's personal student program thing. He'll be a force to be reckoned with.

WhyAmIHere: again… you can see why I'm so pissed at All Might.

PresentationMichael: It's legit only been two days. They plan on doing this ALL MONTH and they've only just gotten started.

NapTime: jfc I cannot believe this is my life right now. I am looking forward to this more than the new season of the Bachelor. Sho I love your kids.

WhyAmIHere: they aren't my kids…

PresentationMichael: Yes they are

HauntThisBitch: they definitely are

CementossMeOutAWindow: yes they are

ALiteralBlessing: yes they are dearie.

WhyAmIHere: yeah fine… I guess they are.

NapTime: THE QUEEN HAS SPOKEN IT IS DECREED.

PresentationMichael: ALL HAIL THE QUEEN!!!

***

[UA Faculty Chat]

SmallMight: I believe we need to up our security on campus.

Overlord: And why is that do you think?

SmallMight: I have the suspicion that I am being personally targeted.

WhyAmIHere: Why, what happened?

SmallMight: Today has been particularly trying. First this morning I have found all my cups, mugs, and various office supplies have… shrunk. I can hardly pick up my pencil now as they are so small. My tea cups are Nezu sized now and I cannot logically drink from them.

CementossMeOutAWindow: maybe you just grew? You are a pretty large person.

HauntThisBitch: Perhaps the office supply closet has more?

SmallMight: that is the next thing. I thought the same, but when I went to look, the entire closet was empty.

PresentationMichael: really? I was just in there and there were plenty of pencils and pens. Nothing looked weird to me.

ALiteralBlessing: Perhaps you should stop by my office for a check up dearie. This is a bit worrying.

NapTime: I am literally in the faculty lounge rn and all of your mugs are fine, yagi

SmallMight: I will be there soon, Chiyo.

***

[Beware Class 1-A]

WhoLetTheDogOut: Okay, I will admit this is very entertaining.

RootinTootinShootin: did they enlist in another students help for that one?

HatsumesKeeper: No… Hatsume built a shrink ray. It only lasts for about an hour, but it is admittedly very impressive.

BewareItBites: **@WhyAmIHere** I need clarification on the rules here

WhyAmIHere: what

BewareItBites: Does it count as them getting caught if I saw Hatsume and the eldest Midoriya walking down the hall with the shrink ray in hand?

WhyAmIHere: Did you see them shrinking anything?

BewareItBites: No

WhyAmIHere: Did you hear them talking about the plan?

BewareItBites: Nope

WhyAmIHere: Did you know it was a shrink ray at the time you saw them?

BewareItBites: not a clue

WhyAmIHere: then as far as I'm concerned their plan was a success and they weren't caught. The points count.

HatsumesKeeper: She got extra points from me because that shrink ray is actually really impressive AND she didn't blow anything up while making it.

NapTime: Shit, that's pretty impressive. Can *__I__* give her extra points for that?

HatsumesKeeper: Sure, I'll add it to the tally.

***

[Beware Class 1-A]

BewareItBites: I cannot believe this is happening right now.

WhyAmIHere: What did they do now?

NapTime: I just saw All Might walk out of class to stand in the hallway for five minutes, staring out the window like he was contemplating jumping out of it. What's going on?

BewareItBites sent an image: [Class1Ain1B.png]

BewareItBites: Your kids convinced my kids somehow to switch classrooms for the day. I just showed up and they were all here ready to learn.

WhyAmIHere: and your kids are where?

BewareItBites: Apparently in your classroom according to your kids. They are being surprisingly well behaved and seem eager to learn from someone new.

BewareItBites: Can I teach your kids today?

WhyAmIHere: go for it. Gives me an excuse to take a nap.

CementossMeOutAWindow: you need an excuse?

PresentationMichael: he's already asleep.

RootinTootinShootin: It's been two minutes

NapTime: Sho can literally sleep anywhere and fall asleep in seconds but then doesn't sleep for another six days.

ALiteralBlessing: It is a problem I've been trying to solve for a decade

now.

PresentationMichael: same

NapTime: I literally have to knock him out with my gas when it gets too bad

BewareItBites: well these kids are literal angels and I would be happy to baby sit anytime.

***

[UA Faculty Chat]

SmallMight: Is this happening to anyone else?

HatsumesKeeper: is what happening?

NapTime: what's happened this time?

SmallMight: I have come to work today and my desk, chair, and entire office has been saran wrapped. And when I came to class today many of my students were missing only for the so called 'pack' to dramatically enter the room screaming "I AM HERE" before walking to their desk like nothing happened. Then at lunch today I was on the phone with Tsukauchi and my calls kept dropping.

PresentationMichael: Are you trying to blame a villain for your phone being bad?

SmallMight: I do not know what is happening.

SmallMight: And to top it all off, this entire week it's as if the students are simply extra clumsy! Anytime one of our students is walking in front of me, they drop something and have to stop to pick it up. I have nearly crashed into most of them and I *__have__* knocked over young Ashido, Kirishima, and Kaminari.

SmallMight: Speaking of, @**WhyAmIHere** your child is immensely terrifying when he is angry. I apologized immensely to the young Kaminari for knocking him over and young Shinsou actually bared his teeth at me.

WhyAmIHere: He's basically a cat. Zashi and I have discovered this.

PresentationMichael: It's so cute. You should see him cuddling up with the pack when they're over at our house. It's the cutest thing I've

ever seen.

NapTime: Pics or it didn't happen.

PresentationMichael sent an image: [packnightfoxpile1.png]

PresentationMichael sent an image: [packnightfoxpile2.png]

PresentationMichael sent an image: [packnightfoxpile3.png]

PresentationMichael sent an image: [packnightfoxpile4.png]

NapTime: akdjfahgakjdfahg SO CUTE OH MY GOD

HauntThisBitch: is the large fox in the center Midoriya?

WhyAmIHere: Katsuki yeah. It's a thing. He doesn't use it often for personal reasons but he's thinking about using it more now.

PresentationMichael: We're working on helping him train with it! He's doing very well!

WhoLetTheDogOut: I can attempt to help him as well if needed. I'm sure our quirks are very different, but I am here if he needs it.

WhyAmIHere: I'll let him know.

SmallMight: Is no one else worried about the strange happenings? It has been going on for two weeks now. Yesterday I found my entire office covered in rubber ducks. And even more inside my desk drawers.

NapTime: I mean… it really sounds like a you problem, no offence Yagi

Overlord: I can assure you that there have been no villains infiltrating campus! There is no need to worry!

SmallMight: Then why is this happeniadhgjalkg

PresentationMichael: uhh what happened?

CementossMeOutAWindow sent an image: [spiderwebbed.png]

***

[Beware Class 1-A]

NapTime: Is that Sero's tape? Does that count as getting caught?

WhyAmIHere: You cannot prove it's his and we did not see him do it. I'm inclined to allow it.

HatsumesKeeper: Should we… get him out?

HauntThisBitch: It is rather funny to see him all tangled up like that.

PresentationMichael: And he definitely deserves it.

BewareItBites: doesn't he have class to teach this afternoon?

WhyAmIHere: Do any of you have anything to do?

NapTime: OMG we can have a fun rescue mission or something with all the teachers vs the kids! Kan bring your class! It'll be fun.

BewareItBites: this is like asking for disaster

HatsumesKeeper: I can bring Midoriya and Hatsume. It'd be good for them to see everyone in action and get a bit of experience with 1-B as well.

CementossMeOutAWindow: I will come if only to repair damage. The eldest Midoriya likes to make my job difficult.

NapTime: YAY GROUP ADVENTURE!!!

***

[Beware Class 1-A]

WhyAmIHere: Sound off, how many of you have caught my students (the pack specificially) doing the pranks/inconveniences?

PresentationMichael: I caught Kirishima in the middle of gluing all of All Mights pencils to the bottom of his desk.

BewareItBites: I caught the pink one moving all of his office furniture two inches to the left.

CementossMeOutAWindow: which pink one?

BewareItBites: Aizawa's pink one.

HatsumesKeeper: I walked in looking for Hatsume only to find her

replacing members of the pack with robot versions of themselves before class.

NapTime: Point of clarification. Does it count if I was involved in the prank but no one else caught us?

WhyAmIHere: If no one else catches them, then you are free to be involved. What did they do?

NapTime: Your son brainwashed me into using my quirk on Yagi and he 'accidentally' slept through an entire day. He may or may not have woken up inside a vent but I have no idea how Shinsou managed to get him up there.

Overlord: Young Kirishima and Sero assisted him! I will admit that I am stumped on who kept dropping Yagi's calls. While it could have been a coincidence of bad service, I have it narrowed down to three possibilities. Aizawa, should you find out who it is, I do believe you owe them an A in their class.

NapTime: oh shit…

WhoLetTheDogOut: I honestly did not expect anyone to actually be able to do it.

WhyAmIHere: You didn't see ANYONE who could have been responsible?

Overlord: I would not lie about this! Whoever it is, I am very impressed!

PresentationMichael: my bet is on Izuku.

CementossMeOutAWindow: same

ALiteralBlessing: I think young Hatsume is a good bet. She does have the tech know how.

HauntThisBitch: I too think Hatsume

HatsumesKeeper: I feel like it's my duty as her father to bet for Hatsume.

RootinTootinShootin: I vote Midoriya. He hasn't participated in anything other than the group pranks so I feel like he's due.

WhyAmIHere: Izuku specifically said he did not want to participate.

WhyAmIHere: I have a suspicion and if it was them then they deserve the A.

Overlord: Ohh? Who is it? I am intrigued.

WhyAmIHere: I'll need to confirm it.

***

(just a reminder)

Kaminari Denki – PikaPika

Shinsou Hitoshi - WhatIsSleep

Midoriya Izuku – PapaGreenBean

Midoriya Katsuki – PackMom

Todoroki Shouto – DaddyHotPocket

Sero Hanta – ScotchTape

Kirishima Eijirou – OurPetRock

Hatsume Mei – 1HourSinceOurLastExplosion

Ashido Mina – AlienQueen

[The Pack Chat]

GranDadZawa: Alright. Prank month is over and you've all received your extra credit points. While you did get caught quite a few times, your successful pranks/inconveniences outweigh the unsuccessful ones by a lot. You've worked together often and found new and impressive ways of using your quirks to assist your pranks/inconveniences. I am proud of you all.

OurPetRock: omg grandad is proud of us

PikaPika: I'm legit bout to cry rn omg

PackMom: dorks. He's always proud, we're fuckin' great

PapaGreenBean: As much as I did not approve of this month's activities, it was actually really funny and like… thanks you guys…

for sticking up for me. I… I really appreciate it.

1HourSinceOurLastExplosion: Even my school dad is proud of us. I got so many extra credit points!

GranDadzawa: Yeah yeah, I'm proud. You still need work on your stealth training, but I am impressed that you've come so far without formal training at all.

DaddyHotPocket: is this what fatherly love feels like?

WhatIsSleep: bro…

AlienQueen: can we prank Endeavor next?

ScotchTape: I'm down for this.

PapaGreenBean: baaaabee…. I will literally kill Endeavor for you. Just say the word.

AlienQueen: oh shit you got baby ready to commit murder

DaddyHotPocket: I appreciate it but I would rather you prove him and All Might wrong by being the best quirkless hero ever instead of being in prison.

PapaGreenBean: :(

GranDadzawa: no murder

GranDadzawa: You all got relatively the same amount of extra credit, however there is still the matter of one prank. If it was you, fess up now.

ScotchTape: oh shit… uhhhh

AlienQueen: wait what happened? Why does he sound so ominous!?

PackMom: Who fuckin' did something stupid?

WhatIsSleep: I don't know when or where, but I know who it was and I have never been more proud.

GranDadzawa: So it was Kaminari then

WhatIsSleep: What? I didn't say that!

GranDadzawa: your dopey smile said enough

PikaPika: I maaaay or may not have done something. That depends on if it succeeded

GranDadzawa: Something did happen and Nezu is currently unaware of who it was that completed the prank. If you can confirm what you did and it aligns with All Might's story then…

WhatIsSleep sent an image: [inphysicalpain.png]

WhatIsSleep: whatever he's typing, he looks like it is physically paining him to say it

PikaPika: theeeeen????

GranDadzawa: then I will give you an A for the rest of the year…

PikaPika: FUCK YEAH IT WAS ME I DID IT I HAVE AN A IN CLASS OMG BE PROUD OF ME GUYS ADKJFAKHG;AKHG

AlienQueen: wait WHAT?! What did you DO?!

OurPetRock: yeah seriously bro what?

DaddyHotPocket: As your dad, I am very proud of you for succeeding

PikaPika: omg daddy thank you sm aldkfja gha

PackMom: you don't actually get the A if you don't confirm the story dumbass

PapaGreenBean: I'm actually really curious

PikaPika: Okay SO

PikaPika: It was that day that I overshot myself in training last week right? And so Toshi was helping me to Recovery Girl so I didn't hurt myself right? Well, I didn't actually overshoot myself as much as I PRETENDED to do

ScotchTape: You FAKED weh-ing?

1HourSinceOurLastExplosion: (Side note, I am working on a grounding thing for you, Denki! Izuku and I are ALMOST DONE!)

PikaPika: (omg babe thaaaaanks)

PikaPika: ANYWAY so there was a point when we got to our hall that I fully 'woke up' or whatever, yeah? But I pretended not to and was just kind of wandering around right? And then I pretended to slip and kind of just, slumped on the floor.

WhatIsSleep: I remember that. You scared the shit out of me you bitch

GranDadzawa: what does this have to do with the prank?

PikaPika: I'm getting there! Let me tell my story! This is a big moment for me!

PikaPika: SO I collapse right? And I'm sitting there pretending to freak out so Toshi, like the absolute angel he is, helps me put my head between my knees and just kind of sits with me until I'm back to myself. Poor baby didn't even know I was pretending.

WhatIsSleep: I WAS SO WORRIED YOU BITCH

PikaPika: So you guys know from the USJ that I can use my quirk to like, contact people sort of. It's more just I can feel electric radio waves and stuff like that. Well I've been practicing doing that more because I didn't want something like the USJ happening again! And if I focus really hard, I can affect cell phones and computers and stuff nearby.

PikaPika: Well I just so *__happened__* to know that All Might was in the teacher's lounge on his break and I could feel the electricity from his phone, so I *__pretended__* to collapse and focused really hard and I totally made him drop his calls

PikaPika: and he tried switching to the landline after it dropped 3 times and I kept doing it. I only stopped because he gave up and started texting the person and it's a lot harder to focus on texts than calls and I was already kind of burnt out from before BUT NO ONE EVER FIGURED OUT AND NOW I HAVE THE HIGHEST GRADE IN CLASS BITCHES

GranDadzawa: I only said I'd give you an A. I did not say you'd get a perfect score. The Midoriyas and Yayurozou are both ahead of you still.

PikaPika: I'LL TAKE IT!

GranDadzawa: I *__CAN__* and *__WILL__* still expel you if needed. Do not

use this as an excuse to slack off.

PikaPika: honestly I don't think mom will let me, so that's valid

PackMom: fuck no I won't.

GranDadzawa: Nezu said to tell you he's proud of you as well.

PikaPika: that… actually kind of worries me…

WhatIsSleep: bitch you are so in for it next time I see you.

PikaPika: *__EEP__*

PapaGreenBean: you guys… I really do appreciate you all so much… I can't believe you guys did all this for me

AlienQueen: PROTECT THE BABY

ScotchTape: PROTECT THE BABY

OurPetRock: PROTECT THE BABY

1HourSinceOurLastExplosion: PROTECT THE BABY

WhatIsSleep: PROTECT THE BABY

DaddyHotPocket: PROTECT THE BABY

PackMom: *__sigh__* PROTECT THE BABY

PackMom sent an image: [cryingAGAIN.png]

PikaPika: PROTECT THE BABY!!!!!

***

[Aizawa Shouta] has requested a private chat

Yagi: Yes, Eraser?

Aizawa: Have you learned your lesson yet?

Yagi: my lesson? Are you the one behind all the strange things happening these past few weeks?

Aizawa: My students are. Many of them decided you needed to be taught that it isn't okay to crush a child's dream and then leave them on the roof of a building on their own after they were attacked by a villain.

Yagi: … ah, I see

Yagi: I am very sorry about that… The eldest Midoriya has lectured me already about it

Aizawa: And yet I'm pretty sure you didn't ACTUALLY apologize to Izuku did you?

Yagi: I did! I caught up with him after the attack

Aizawa: and told him he couldn't be a hero without YOU. Which ISNT TRUE.

Aizawa: Don't fuck with my kids, Yagi. Not only will they go to hell and back for Izuku, but I can make this entire month look like a play date if I hear you've told ANYONE they can't be a hero ever again. Do you understand me?

Yagi: I understand

Yagi: I really do apologize for my words. Young Midoriya has already started proving me wrong.

Aizawa: Yeah, I'm not the one you need to apologize to.

Chapter End Notes

Summary:
The prank wars begin and Aizawa informs all of the teachers (except for All Might) of the various shenanigans. Izuku decided not to participate in the pranks, though he did participate in the class-wide ones for solidarity. Aizawa had to convince Iida that it was okay and that he'd get his own extra credit for allowing the students to do their pranks without interferance and even more extra credit if he helped. Some teachers, like Midnight, participate in the pranks and they even get class 1-B to help for one. All Might is extremely confused the whole time and this lasts about a month. All of the Pack gets caught a few times, but ultimately Aizawa is very proud of them for their accomplishments. In the

end, Aizawa threatens All Might not to ever hurt his kids again or else this will just start over.
ONE person managed to complete a prank without Nezu knowing and now has an A for the rest of the year and that student was..... Denki!!! He used his quirk to make All Might's phone calls drop and Nezu couldn't see who was doing it, though he had suspicions.

I really wanted Denki to get a mini spotlight because I love the idea that he is actually really smart he just struggles with actual school stuff b/c of ADHD and his quirk. I wanted him to be the one to be sneaky enough to avoid Nezu. (I loved the ideas for it to be Izuku! But I was kind of already set on Denki, so sorry guys!)

Other Pranks they did but that didn't make it into the story (but might make it into it's own? maybe?)
- All of the pack refusing to speak to All Might for an entire day or pretending they didn't hear him
- The entire pack doing their training with All Might and refusing to use their quirks AT ALL
- Uraraka floating all of the desks in the class room and attaching them to the ceiling so all the students were sitting on the ceiling for class when All Might came in.
- All of the students wearing birthday hats and acting super confused when All Might asked who's birthday it was

As a side note, this was SUPER fun to write. Would anyone be interested in a text-chat fic on it's own based on this story? Just the various chats happening throughout this story? I wouldn't make anything plot important happen so you wouldn't HAVE to read the text-chat fic. But if people are interested I might start one! This was a lot of fun!

Back on our plot bullshit next chapter! Eat food and get some sleep! Drink your water!

Chapter 37: A Hero

Chapter Summary

> The pack settles into their new bond and internships are coming up so there's much to discuss.

Chapter Notes

> We're back on our actual plot line!
> Just a forewarning for the story from here on. Since our characters are at a lot of different places and this story is very heavily Pack based, there are a lot of things coming up from canon that I just won't focus on or won't have in the story at all. Hosu will still happen for example, but the Stain arc will not since it's currently not important to my story. The further we get into this story, the further we'll get from canon and I don't plan on getting into manga canon pretty much at all since my story should diverge almost completely before then. So just be aware! (IF there's anything you're just dying to see though, please let me know! I'll take it into consideration!)
>
> TRIGGER WARNINGS:
> Mentions of Endeavor's abuse
> Talk of therapy and mental health issues
> Kind of self harm? (Unintentionally at least. It's mostly Denki briefly mentioning that his quirk hurts him.)
> Mentions of nightmares

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Getting used to other people in your head is a nightmare and Katsuki had not been prepared for it when he originally agreed to bonding with the pack. He’s not necessarily complaining, since he feels closer to the losers than ever before and it’s made his fox absolutely preen in excitement, but it’s *weird* and *new* and Katsuki doesn’t like *weird* and *new*.

So the past month has been chaotic, but in all honesty it’s actually helped a lot.

Working together for the pranks on All Bitch and many, *many* pack nights they’d had definitely brought them all closer and gave them a better understand of the new bond they’d formed.

To Katsuki it was a lot like the scents he got with various emotions. And when he explained that, the others said it was similar for them.

Each pack member had their own feeling in his mind, their own sensation on his skin. And yeah, Aizawa was right. When they figured that out it was a lot easier to temper and control the bond than it had been previously.

Shouto and Izuku were the first ones Katsuki could pick out instantly through the bond- which made sense when he thought about it. He could feel them both in the circles above his heart where his bond marks shone the brightest. Two circles, one smaller than the other, that glimmered and burned when he was feeling something from either of his partners. It wasn't just the marks though, because he could feel them in his mind as well, taste them on his tongue.

When Shouto used his ice, Katsuki could feel the goose pimples wash over his own skin and taste the frost on his tongue, even if he was nowhere near the other boy. When he used his fire, Katsuki could feel himself sweat even more than usual, could feel the embers against his cheeks even if Shouto was nowhere in sight.

Izuku was a bit different since he had no quirk to associate the sensations with. He was the smaller of the circles on Katsuki's chest, but no less important. His bond came with sparks across Katsuki's fingers and the slick of oil across his skin. It came with the taste of electricity and metal on his tongue and the excited racing heartbeat in his chest even when Izuku was all the way across campus in his labs.

Hitoshi was a strong, ever present pressure in Katsuki's head. Like a high that fogged his senses just the right amount, like a pressure headache that didn't actually hurt. He was the glowing designs on Katsuki's throat that seemed to flicker to life anytime the other boy was near, the taste of something smokey and heady in the back of his tongue.

Mina came with something sharp and acidic to Katsuki's nose, but it wasn't wholly unpleasant. More like smelling a new perfume for the first time and it shocking your system until you get used to it. She was the bouncing of his feet when he was sitting down, the tempo of a song he didn't know beating through his head as if he was the one listening to it. With her smiles and hugs came the bright glow of lines across their stomachs and ribs, stretching with the warmth of her arms around them.

Mei's sensations were perhaps the hardest to pinpoint as they were so close to Izuku's that Katsuki often mistook them for each other. The slick of oil. The taste of metal. But there was a bubbling under his skin that came with Mei that was unique to her. Anticipation, excitement, the *need* to learn and create and build. Her bond marks were the sharp lines across everyone's faces that sat just under their eyes, glowing each time an explosion wracked the school or a shout came from their home labs.

Hanta's bond marks were unsurprisingly banded across their elbows and forearms, wrapping in blinding light whenever the taller boy laughed or grinned in their direction. He came with the pull of something on Katsuki's body. Like someone was grabbing him by the wrist and yanking him in whichever direction he needed to go. But he was also something secure around Katsuki's wrists, like he was holding everyone together with his tape even when they were miles away in their own homes.

Denki was of course *electric*. He tasted like the ozone Katsuki had always associated with Izuku's scent, only sharper and wilder. His was a buzzing around their skin and the need to *move* all the time. His bond marks spread and arched across their backs like branches of trees, almost perfectly lining up with the Lichtenburg scars Denki himself sported anytime he stripped himself of his shirt.

And then there was Eijirou. Eijirou's marks were branded across Katsuki's hands and came with the clenching of knuckles and the tense ripple of muscles across his arms. There was the scent of dirt and earth that invaded his senses and the heat of sunshine on his face whenever Eijirou smiled. He was sturdy, a rock in the middle of the ocean, settling them and grounding them all where the waters of the rest of them crashed against each other.

The others explained that Katsuki's bond came through with the crackling sensations across their palms and the burning through the veins of their arms. He tasted like caramel and heat, though the others admitted his sensations were muddled a lot with Shouto and Izuku's. Katsuki's own mark was the glowing symbol on his forehead, one that only appeared on the others when his own bond was open and reaching for them, otherwise it was only visible on him.

Over the month they'd all experimented with reaching for each other, with sending mental messages or reading each other's minds. It took a while to control even just a little bit, but it came with the knowledge that while the bond was strong, they couldn't just read each other's

minds anytime.

Aizawa explained it like a faucet.

The marks were their handles. By opening themselves up, activating their marks, they allowed themselves to flow through the pipes of the bond. They could feel each other's emotions. Could feel each other's bodies like it was their own. Feel their pain. (They discovered that part when Izuku's surprise echoed through their bodies one day, followed by the sharp sensation of pain across their arms. Turns out an invention had gone wrong and he'd been rushed to recovery girl to pull the shrapnel from his forearms. They were all sore for days after.)

Reading minds still wasn't something they could do, but it appeared that with the opening of the faucet, they could send each other messages and thoughts no matter where they were. It wasn't precise and took a lot of energy, but Aizawa assured them the control would come easier with practice and it would be as easy as breathing the stronger their bond grew.

Still… it was weird having others in his head. It was weird knowing they could feel him just as much as he could feel them. Once they'd learned they could turn off the faucet, it got easier to focus and keep themselves from overwhelming each other, but it was weird.

And it didn't always work.

There had been plenty of nights were the panic gripping Katsuki's throat or chest woke him up and he found Shouto or Hitoshi having a nightmare. There had been days during training where Denki whey-ed and the rest of them could barely function on their own as well. There had been days when Katsuki was overwhelmed by the trauma of the surrounding people that the pack practically force isolated him in a room for a while until they were all able to *breathe* again.

But it was getting easier and Katsuki was starting to get used to being able to feel the others.

The fox inside of him loved it, and Katsuki had a suspicion it had to do with the fact that he *knew* the others were safe even if he couldn't see them. It settled the sort of manic energy and untampered protectiveness the fox felt anytime someone in the pack got hurt during training or in the labs before the bonding. Made it easier to see the fog around them on their bad days.

He felt settled.

Comfortable.

Happy.

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"Man I cannot wait for these internships! We all decided right?" Izuku glanced up from his notebook as Eijiro dropped onto the bench at their table, his tray of food teetering precariously with the motion. The redhead grinned widely and nudged the greenette. "You get to intern too, right?"

The boy nodded eagerly, returning the grin. "Yeah! Since Support is allowed to participate in the sports festival, we can intern too if we get offers. Mei is interning with her moms and their support company. I'm interning with Nezu! I've learned a lot under Meijima-Sensei for my support stuff, but I really want to start working more on my analysis and my more technical skills."

A sharp whistle cut through their conversation and the greenette glanced up to see Hanta, Denki, and Mina plopping down across from them, Kaachan and Shouto on their heels. Mei was already at his side muttering to Hitoshi about the mask prototype Izuku was currently working on.

"Seriously, I'm terrified for the day you and Nezu take over the world," Denki whined, almost draping himself dramatically across Kaachan's lap which only served for the other blonde to scoff and shove him off. "Just promise me you'll remember us when you're our supreme overlord."

Giggling, Izuku shook his head. "If anything, Nezu would be *Supreme* overlord and I'd just be a regular overlord. But don't worry, I'll make sure you're all treated like princesses."

"Speaking of internships," Hanta interrupted, setting down his pop to glance at the others. "We all turned them in right? Who's going with who?"

"I'm going with Uraraka to intern with Gunhead," Mina said eagerly, practically bouncing on her feet. "Seeing Kaachan and Izuku training all the time in their hand to hand really inspired me. I want to get better at it since my quirk is more for distance fighting. If someone like Sensei ever showed up I'd be practically useless."

Izuku bobbed his head in agreement. "That's a great idea, Mina! And

you can always practice with us too! Shouto has really good hand to hand training too."

The boy in question nodded and slurped at his soba. "I'm turning my papers in tomorrow. I need to speak with sensei about it first before I decide completely."

"And I'm interning with Loud Dad," Hitoshi chimed in from down the table, peeking around Mei to join the conversation. "We both have voice quirks so he's going to help me work on control and figuring out what my quirk can and can't do."

Izuku couldn't help but think it was a great decision honestly. A lot of kids didn't want to intern with their parents (or adopted parents in Hitoshi's case) but him and Mei were different. Mei knew her mothers wouldn't baby her and would finally give her full access to their company labs (with supervision of course), would let her work with teams and other specialists to learn things she didn't know yet, so it worked out for her. Hitoshi was relatively the same. There weren't a lot of heroes out there with voice quirks, and none that Izuku knew of with a quirk quite like Hitoshi's. Not to mention the fact that his quirk was only growing stronger now that his Satori side was growing as well. Having someone who knew what he was would help immensely in learning how to balance the two abilities.

"That's what I was thinking too," the purple haired boy smirked, causing Izuku to blush brightly at being caught mumbling.

"I'm going with Fourth Kind," Eijiro grinned, clenching his fist in determination. "He's just so manly and I think he's cool."

"I didn't get as many offers as everyone else," Denki chimed in with a pout before shrugging, "but I did get an offer from Loud Dad too! So I'm going with him! He has experience in his quirk damaging his ears when he was younger so I think he'd be a good choice in helping me learn better control over my lightning so I don't short circuit as much and I don't hurt myself. My scars are cool and all, but I'd really rather not with the burns," he joked.

Izuku couldn't help but snort when Kaachan mumbled something like 'is that the *only* reason, Pikachu?' that sent Denki's face burning a bright red, but he ignored it in order to turn towards the blonde completely.

"Kaachan did you decide who you want to intern with? You got a *lot* of offers!"

His boyfriend blushed slightly, the soft pink looking absolutely adorable on his slightly tanned skin and Izuku felt a bubble of affection flutter through his stomach at the sight.

“Course I decided,” Kaachan grunted, rolling his eyes. “I *almost* went with Best Jeanist because he’s top five, but he’s also too focused on appearance and looking good. Plus, I have the feeling my hair wouldn’t survive whatever he put me through,” the boy shivered, running a hand over the half braid that Mina had put in his hair earlier in the day before training. “I got an offer from Miruko though, the Rabbit Hero.”

And *that* surprised him. Sure, Kaachan and the Rabbit Hero had a lot in common personality wise, but their quirks were extremely different. He couldn’t imagine why the other boy would choose her over a higher ranked hero at all.

“I told Aizawa that I’m going to start using the fox more,” Kaachan said in way of explanation, shrugging at their shocked faces. “The Inari made me out to be some sort of big deal or a guiding light or some shit so I figure I’m not *supposed* to be hiding the fox anymore. Before? Sure. It was too dangerous, but now I’m stronger and I’ve got a pack behind me,” he said with a proud smirk. “The fuckers can try to eat me all they want, we won’t let em get close enough to succeed.”

“Wait,” Eijirou frowned, holding up a hand. “Are you like, coming out then? Like, you’re going to tell people what you are?”

Katsuki’s face twisted up in response, not in anger, but like he was contemplating the question. “Figured I would. Aizawa didn’t exactly hide it from Loud Dad or Nezu and he said if people ask he tells them.”

Mina hummed around her mouthful of rice and tapped her fingers on the table. “Will people even believe you?”

“You guys did,” Kaachan answered, which was true. But they all knew it was different than the general public believing him. “Plus it doesn’t matter if they do or not. It’s not their fuckin’ business. The Inari made it seem important so I’m gonna act like it is. I don’t fuckin’ know *why* but it just- I don’t know, it feels fuckin’ right.”

“But why Miruko?” Mei asked with a confused frown.

“She’s got an animal quirk for starters,” the blonde said immediately. “I got an offer from Hawks too, but our quirks don’t really work

together if I want to *learn* from someone. He's a fucking bird. My quirk lets me fly, but I can't fly when I'm using the fox."

Oh. "But Miruko is a ground hero," Izuku chimed in, excitement thrumming through his veins and a blush decorating his cheeks when Kaachan turned a proud sort of look in his direction. "You're already super skill in aerial combat because of your explosions and mobility, but moving around on the ground *without* them is completely new. Well, mostly," he corrected. "We practiced a lot with your shifting this summer, but not combat training."

Kaachan was nodding his head along with a grin. "Yeah, and Miruko is a fuckin' badass. She doesn't take shit from *anyone* and has had to learn how to use her quirk for all kinds of different combat and scenarios. Sensei thinks it'd be a good idea too."

Izuku couldn't help but agree.

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Shouto was nervous.

Momma Inko was a kind and gentle woman, something he'd never really had in his life before. Sure, Fuyumi was gentle and kind, but she was also scared. She stood aside when Endeavor forced Shouto into training. She pretended not to see the bruises and the pain the boy went through. Momma Inko was different. She was strong and intense. She didn't let others push her around and she stood up for her beliefs and her children stronger than anyone else he'd ever met.

But Shouto wasn't used to having a parent that really cared. His father clearly didn't, his mother had been missing from his life for years, and his siblings had their own issues to deal with. So knowing Momma Inko cared was different than *accepting* that she cared.

So naturally, Shouto was nervous to talk to her about the decision he'd come to. He didn't want her to be angry at him because more than anything he wanted her to be proud of him. Wanted her to love him. And logically he knew she wouldn't hit him or yell at him… but the deep seated panic in his gut was a familiar feeling he just couldn't get rid of.

His phone dinged in his pocket as he fiddled with the papers in his hands.

He just needed her to sign them. That's all… but she'd ask questions

he wasn't quite sure he was ready to answer. Questions he didn't know the answers *to*.

Kaachan 15:32

we can feel your panic, Sho. You okay? Need us to come home?

Shouchan 15:34

I'm okay. Just nervous. I'll tell you about it later.

Steeling his nerves, the dual haired boy took a deep breath and stepped into the kitchen of his new home.

And it still felt sort of new to him. He'd been there for nearly two months now and still it was so fresh and different than what he was used to. The design was more western than the traditional décor of his family home, and there were pictures and drawings and decorations littering the home in various corners. The fridge boasted a few polaroids of the pack and the boys, even one of the priestess Hinko.

The home wasn't dirty by any means, but it clearly looked lived in. There were mugs left on the kotatsu, jackets tossed over the couch and a half folded load of laundry on the other end. There were dishes in the sink and homework strewn about the kitchen table where Katsuki and Izuku had left it when they'd left for a grocery run.

It felt like an actual home.

"Shouto? Sweetheart, are you okay?"

The boy jumped slightly at the voice, turning towards where Momma Inko was wiping her hands by the sink. There was a worried crinkle on her brow that Shouto hated to see, but also felt a rush of happiness at knowing that she was *worried* at all.

"Yes," he said simply, struggling to find the words to tell her what he needed. But the woman was patient, folding her hand towel and setting it aside to give him her full attention. Her gentle smile urged him on and he smoothed out the papers in his hands as he stared down at them. "I need your signature," he said quietly.

"For your internships, right? Izuku and Katsuki asked me this morning. Have you finally decided?" She asked, taking a step forward and reaching out a hand for the papers.

Shouto didn't hand them over just yet, hesitating and holding them against his chest for a moment. That panic came back with the deepening crinkle and the boy bit his lip. When he didn't say anything, or even move, the green haired woman gently led him to the table and sat him down. Her hands loosened his fingers and she set the papers aside, not sparing them a glance as she focused on Shouto completely.

"Sweetheart? Can you tell me what's wrong?"

"I don't want you to be angry with me," he admitted, glancing down at where their hands were connected.

He could feel Momma Inko's frown on him, feel the gentle squeeze of her fingers. "Oh, Shouto. I would never be angry with you, you know that right? Granted if you did something stupid or got yourself hurt, I'd be upset. But I'll never be angry at *you*, okay?"

He didn't quite believe her, but the gentleness of her tone and the smooth touch of her hands on his calmed him slightly. She let him sit in silence for a while, let him trace the lines on her hands with his fingers as he struggled and panicked and calmed over and over again.

"We get offers for internships after the sports festival," he finally managed to say, not daring to look up from where he was pressing the pads of his fingers against hers. The motion was comforting, the touch something he could focus on instead of the worry, so he kept doing it. "Katsuki and I got the most offers in class. There- there were a lot of people to choose from," he shrugged. Momma Inko didn't interrupt and he wasn't sure if he was grateful for it or not. "My- um… Endeavor Agency sent me an offer."

There.

It was done.

He told her.

But instead of the anger or the disappointment he expected to hear, there was only a gentle, patient silence. She didn't squeeze his hands or move at all other than the slight tilt of her head, the movement of her hair drawing Shouto's eyes finally.

And he saw understanding there in those big green eyes, even if it was tinged with… something. Sadness? Probably. He wasn't the best at reading emotions. Words were better for him.

“Do you want to intern with your father?”

He swallowed, pulling one hand away from hers to grab the papers off the table and hand them to her. His father’s logo was printed at the top of the sheet, but Shouto knew the letter was just a generic, professional one no doubt typed out and printed by some random clerk in the offices rather than the man on top.

“With- with the bigger heroes,” he started, dropping his hand to his leg when she took the papers, rubbing the pads of his fingers against the coarse material of his jeans to calm himself, “they usually send offers but you don’t actually work with them personally. A lot of times you’ll work with the sidekicks. My father has never actually personally worked with an intern before,” he explained.

Inko nodded, setting the paper in her lap and meeting Shouto’s eyes again. “Can you tell me why you want to intern there instead of somewhere else?”

“I need to learn to control my fire,” Shouto said truthfully. “Katsuki and Izuku made good points at the festival. If I want to be a hero, if I want to save people, I can’t be giving them half my effort. I can’t be hiding away half of who I am. I could get someone killed that way.” He took a deep breath and pointed at the name he’d circled on the paper. “My father employs mostly sidekicks with fire quirks. I’ve met Burnin’, she’s a really good hero and she has excellent control. She’s loud, but she’s nice. Our quirks are very similar in the way we control them. I…” he paused, the pressure of his fingers against hers stronger as he struggled with what he wanted to say. “I would like to intern with her, but I do not wish to see my father. I am going to tell Sensei too but… my father is scared of you and if he tries to do anything-“

“I won’t allow it,” Momma Inko said confidently. “I’ll talk to him personally if you want. I’ll be honest, Shouto, this is a surprise to me,” she said, her voice turning soft as a smile graced her pretty lips. “I wouldn’t have expected you to want to even see that building again, but I can understand your reasoning. If you think you can do this without it hurting your health, mental or physical, then I’ll sign off on it. But only if you’re sure. We can always find another fire hero. You don’t *have* to do this.”

Relief flooded through the boy and his shoulders sagged slightly.

That had been a lot easier than he’d expected and he let out a soft breath. “Thank you,” he said quietly. “That is the other thing…” he

said, deciding to move to the much easier topic of the second form he'd brought. "Hound Dog came to our class today and we had a lesson on the importance of mental health when becoming a hero. He um… he handed these out," he said, changing the forms so she could see the other permission slip. "He said a lot of heroes have to go to therapy because of things they see or experience during the job, or just on their own and-" he shrugged, glancing at the internship form with a frown. "I think it might be a good idea. For me, I mean. Especially if I want to learn how to be okay with my fire."

"Oh baby," the woman grinned, patting his hand now and nodding. "I think that's a *wonderful* idea. I'm so proud of you. Can I hug you?"

That was another thing that Shouto noticed the woman do. She always asked before touching him too much. Always televised her movements or warned him she was there. Part of him felt a bit frustrated that these things calmed him because it made him feel weak, but the majority of him was grateful. Because as much as he hated to admit it, he *did* struggle sometimes with the gentle touch of a parent.

So he nodded and melted into the warm heat of the woman who'd taken him in.

The woman who had saved him.

The woman who had become *his* hero.

Chapter End Notes

Woo! Internships are coming up! I won't be focusing one *everyones* internships, just as a warning. Honestly, we're going to be really heavily focusing on Katsuki's internship pretty much only. I AM going to write a text chat fic and I'll probably cover everyone else's internships in chat form over there, but nothing really big will happen so you don't HAVE to read it if you don't want to. If something important happens in their internships, it'll be in this story.
SIDE NOTE: I don't know if it was clear but Loud Dad is Present Mic.
Anyway, hope you enjoy! I like how this chapter went and I'm excited to delve more and more into the new bond they all have so let's get going!
Drink water and love yourselves!

Chapter 38: Kid Gloves

Chapter Summary

Day one of Internships begin and Katsuki meets his new mentor.

Chapter Notes

Okay so I had NO plans for this chapter at all and kind of went with it and now it's low key one of my favorite chapters. So I hope you guys enjoy it as much as I did!
Katsuki's internship is probably going to be roughly 3 chapters since it's three days long, but it'll be divided by the kind of training he's doing. It MAY end up being four chapters depending on how the third day goes. I'm not sure yet. Anyway, enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Eraser! You bringing my bunny today?” A loud voice called from behind the duo, causing Katsuki to turn away from the large warehouse to face the woman stomping up to them.

Katsuki would never admit it out loud, but he was *nervous*. Ever since he found out how trash Endeavor and All Might were, he’d had to adjust his views on who his favorite heroes were. And sure, like Izuku, he still respected All Might as a hero, but he was no longer on his favorites list so there had been some shifting of priorities the past few months. Miruko had always been on his top five, but now he’d admit she was settled pretty comfortably in his favorites list, with Hawks as a close second and Eraser as his third. (Not that he’d *ever* tell the cat that.)

So suffice it to say, he was nervous.

Not only was Miruko his favorite, but she was also intimidating as *fuck*.

The woman was built like a bullet, all hard lines and thick muscles that she wasn’t afraid to show off. Her large ears twitched on her head this way and that at every noise, constantly searching for any trouble even as she strode towards them. An on top of all of that, the woman was *confident*. She didn’t take shit from anyone, didn’t care if people liked her. She was crass and loud and cussed just as much as Katsuki did.

Basically she was just *really cool* and Katsuki felt a little bit like Izuku right now as he struggled not to geek out.

“You don’t usually drop off your kiddos,” the woman grinned, slapping a large hand on his teacher’s back and Katsuki watched in amusement when the man stumbled slightly and grunted. “Am I just special or do you not trust me?”

Eraser rolled his eyes and sighed, clearly already tired of the interaction. “This is a special case,” he said as he straightened back up. “Can we talk inside?”

“Sure thing! Come on tiny bunny, let’s go!”

A thick, heavy arm was tossed over Katsuki’s shoulders and he tried desperately not to feel *tiny* under the woman’s size, letting her turn him back around to waltz into the warehouse.

The building itself was rather plain, unassuming besides the white, neon bunny sign about the size of his head that settled on the door itself. There was a palm scanner just off to the side that flickered to life when she slapped her hand on it and led them inside.

To Katsuki’s surprise, the building was mostly an open concept. The ceilings reached high, high above him and the first floor was almost completely made up of what looked like a training room slash obstacle course. There was an office in the back corner, but besides that it looked like the room was entirely used for different sorts of training. The upper floors were open as well with walkways circling around the wall and leading towards various rooms and hallways that Katsuki couldn’t see, but ropes and bars and various other training equipment was hanging from the edges of the overhangs and the center of the ceiling. This early in the morning the building seemed mostly empty, but there were a few people wandering around the upper floors and a woman with a wolf quirk was busy wrapping herself around a hanging rope and pulling herself up with muscles that *almost* rivaled Miruko’s.

They were led through the edge of the obstacle course with all the confidence of the woman who ran the agency and dipped into the back corner office. It was surprisingly messy, with paperwork stacked on every surface and snacks and drinks littered across the various tables and shelves. It wasn’t a very large office, but it was sizable enough to fit a couch and two chairs that Miruko quickly cleared off for them to sit and propped herself up on the desk across from them.

“Alright, ‘Raser, spill it. To what do I owe this *personal* honor?”

The man in question took a deep breath and grunted, rolling his eyes towards Katsuki before sighing the air out all at once. “We figured you should know the truth about Midoriya’s quirk before you start this internship. There was a specific reason he chose you out of all the other options given to him.”

The woman raised a cool, silver brow and turned her grin towards Katsuki. “And here I thought you just liked me.”

“I do,” the boy shrugged, struggling to remain cool and aloof under her gaze. “But I picked you because you have an animal quirk.”

Miruko frown at that, eyebrows scrunching and arms crossing across her chest. Her feet bobbed in the air, something he recognized from Denki as a way to keep him moving without fidgeting too much when he couldn’t bare to stay still. “Correct me if I’m wrong, bunny rabbit, but you’ve got an explosion quirk.”

Katsuki snorted at that and shrugged. “Obviously. You saw the sports festival. My quirk is called Explosion, but that’s why we needed to talk to you.” He paused, tapping his fingers on his biceps as he tried to figure out how to say what he needed to say. Sure, he’d told Eraser that he didn’t want to hide what he was anymore, but growing up doing so made it hard to actually say. Not to mention trying to figure out how to say it to where people believed him. He grunted, face twisting into a sneer in frustration before just spitting it out. “But I’m not human.”

“You and me both, kid,” the woman snorted, her amusement falling slightly into confusion at the look on Katsuki’s face.

“No,” he shook his head. “You’re human with a rabbit quirk. I’m half human with an explosion quirk and half yokai.”

“A demon?” Miruko hummed, eyebrows raising in surprise, though it didn’t look like she thought he was lying. “Well hot damn, consider me honored. What’s that got to do with choosing me?”

A bit thrown off at how easily the woman accepted the information, Katsuki blinked and relaxed slightly. He shifted forward on the couch before shaking his head out and letting his ears and tails show, watching as the rabbit hero perked up with interest. “I’m a Kitsune hybrid,” he answered her question, letting his three tails wave lazily behind him before letting them fall away as he settled back into his seat. “There’s extra stuff too it, but I’m mostly here to learn how to use my fox form. I have my half shift and my full shift, but I’ve never

been allowed to use them until recently for safety reasons. If I want to be the number one hero though, I need to learn."

Miruko looked… excited.

Katsuki could smell the sharp scent of fresh wind and the tang of something spicy in the air as the woman's leg began bouncing even more. "Okay, one, this is fucking cool as fuck! Two, I totally respect the fact that you're willing to get down and dirty with both sides of you. I can't wait to see you fuck up my obstacle course."

With everything taken care of and Eraser leaving, Katsuki indeed found himself in the center of the open first floor. More sidekicks had wandered in and out, all giving Miruko and Katsuki a greeting, briefly introducing themselves, before wandering off to their own business. Katsuki wasn't surprised to see all of them had some sort of animal quirk, but he was surprised at the few amount of sidekicks she had in general.

"I'm an independent agency," the woman shrugged when asked, cocking her hip to the side and crossing her arms. "I'd rather keep up with a small amount of really good heroes than a big amount of average heroes. Now come on, we have time for questions later, tell me about your fox. I wanna see it. Start with the half shift."

With a mental shake, the blonde let his ears and tails back out and let the woman circle him in interest, her eyes roaming across his black fur.

"My fox comes with abilities other than the shift," he admits, his own eyes roaming across the very faint fog surrounding Miruko's feet and the various scars across her skin. "Apparently the abilities depend on the kitsune, but mine are mostly based around emotional stuff. I can smell emotions to start, and I can see trauma on people, sometimes their memories depending on how far I dig. But Eraser is helping me learn how to train that. I mostly need help working my fox into my fighting styles," he admitted. "I trained a lot during the summer with my boyfriend on shifting quickly back and forth between shifts, but not using it in combat."

Miruko nodded, humming. "What do you think your biggest weakness is when it comes to your full shift."

Part of him wanted to snap at the woman that he wasn't *weak,* but he could hear the genuine curiosity in her voice, knowing she wasn't trying to belittle him. So he paused and thought about the question,

face twisted into a concentrated sneer. “Control and communication,” he answered after a few minutes. “I think I *can* communicate in my full shift, but I’ve only done it once and it was… it was the fox talking, not me. The control is my main concern though,” he admitted, eyes following the hero when she finally circled back to stand in front of him. “I’ve only used it to fight three times. The first was at the USJ and… I don’t actually remember any of it. The second time time I…” he paused, chewing anxiously on his lip and clenching his fists at his sides. “The second time I killed something, another yokai that was threatening my pack. And then last month I almost killed my own sister. Might have if it wasn’t for my boyfriend’s stopping me. The fox is extremely protective.” As if to prove his point, he could feel the pressure against the inside of his skin at just the thought of Hideko’s threat on his partners. Like the fox was still angry. “I can’t control it as easily if someone I care about is threatened, and that makes me a danger to others.”

Miruko hummed at his explanation, tapping her fingers on her elbows. “Why do you keep calling it the fox?”

The question threw him off and Katsuki frowned, blinking at the woman. “Because that’s what it is?”

“No,” she drawled, eyes narrowing. “The fox is *you*.”

“It’s different,” Katsuki argued with a shake of his head. “It’s like the fox takes over when I’m out of control.”

“But it doesn’t,” Miruko interrupted, reaching forward to tug on one of Katsuki’s ears, smirking at the growl he released. “I’ll admit I don’t know a lot about Yokai, but when you introduced yourself to me you said you were half human and half Kitsune, right?” The boy raised an eyebrow, not answering verbally because *obviously*, but Miruko didn’t seem bothered. “So why is it when you introduce yourself, you acknowledge that you’re half Kitsune, but when you talk about the shift you consider the Kitsune a different entity than yourself?”

“Because it has a mind of its own,” Katsuki argued, almost growling again when the woman rolled her eyes and interrupted again.

“Tell me,” she said, nodding towards his balled up fists. “When your explosions first came in, did you have control over them?”

Again, the question threw him for a loop and the blonde’s face twisted up in confusion. “A little bit. When I concentrated I could summon them. The more I practiced the more I had control.”

She nodded, “but when you got emotional or upset they started going off without your control right?” She paused just long enough for him to nod before gesturing towards his tails. “Your shift is like that. You think of it as some other thing because you’re not used to using it. You don’t have control over it so it scares you when you lose what little control you *do* have.” She held a hand up to stop him when he opened his mouth to shout at her because he *wasn’t* scared. “I’m fuckin’ serious kid, listen. I bet when your explosions first came in you had emitter gloves yeah? Because you were afraid of accidently hurting someone and the schools probably required it until you learned better control. Well, and correct me if I’m wrong here, but it sounds like you didn’t get the kid gloves for your shift. How often were you allowed to use it as a kid?”

Katsuki frowned, thinking back to his childhood. “A lot,” he answered honestly with a shrug, frowning at her disbelieving look. “I’m more comfortable in my full shift when things get emotional and stressful and shit. But I was only allowed to do it at home. My adopted mom registered the fox as a part of my quirk so teachers wouldn’t get suspicious, but I wasn’t allowed to use it in public.”

Miruko hummed, leaning back against a low wall, eyes narrowing slightly. “Why not?”

“It was too dangerous,” Katsuki shrugged, shoving his hands in the pockets of his shorts. “I’m a hybrid. Apparently to yokai that means I’m some sort of delicacy. We don’t tend to live very long because they hunt us down and eat us when we’re babies. My birth mom put me with a human family and had a priestess keep me hidden. I didn’t use it in public until the attack on the USJ, and even now I’ve only used it around the pack.”

Understanding flitted across Miruko’s face and she hummed with interest, something sparkling in her eyes. “Okay, yeah I get it. Makes sense.”

“It does?”

“Yeah,” Miruko grinned, pointing a long finger in the boy’s direction. “You’ve forced yourself into kid gloves.” Katsuki frowned, head tilting slightly as he tried to figure out what she meant but before he could ask, the woman continued. “Your entire life you’ve been told that your full shift is too dangerous to show strictly due to the fact that *you* and the ones you love could be in danger. The only times you’re comfortable using it are in the presence of your pack or people you

consider *safe*." She held up her hands and wiggled her fingers slightly in demonstration. "So you've put kid gloves on. *But*, it's like you've been wearing those gloves your entire life instead of trying to learn control outside of them. Your mind is convinced that when the fox is out in public, it means you're in danger because that's what you grew up believing. Basically survival instincts cut in."

"But the times I've had to use it *were* because I was in danger," Katsuki argued, receiving a nod from the rabbit hero.

"True," she agreed. "Which has only solidified the thought in your mind. You've subconsciously convinced yourself that the fox is something you can only use when you're in danger so that control slips from your fingers and goes straight for the throat. Literally."

Katsuki couldn't help but grown in frustration at the long winded explanation, throwing his hands up in exasperation and frowning. "So how do we fix it?"

"First of all, we get you out of calling your full shift 'the fox'," she said easily. "It's a part of you just like your quirk. The fox isn't some other being living inside of you, it *is* you, just like my rabbit quirk is me and Endeavor's flames are his. It's just another aspect of who *you* are. Moving on from there, we take off the kid gloves."

Obviously the words were metaphorical, but Katsuki couldn't help but glance down at his own hands and frown. "How do we do that?"

"We train," Miruko grinned, her sharp rabbit teeth glinting in the bright lights of the warehouse. "We need to get you used to using your full shift outside of life or death situations so that when you *are* in danger, you have better control over your abilities. Lemme see that full shift. We'll start with seeing what you can do with it this morning, then this afternoon and tomorrow we'll work on sparing. If we're comfortable with where you are, then we'll go out on a patrol the last day. Sound good?"

So that's what they did.

And damn was Katsuki exhausted by the time lunch came around.

Muriko didn't go easy on him, not that he'd expected her to. Still, she'd been absolutely fascinated with his full shift, as had the other sidekicks that were lounging around the warehouse. She'd expressed how impressive it was that he could shift so quickly, watching him do it over and over again as he ran the obstacle course time after time.

He full shifted through the air to gain momentum and speed before shrinking once more by the time he hit the floor, tucking and rolling into small alcoves and openings in short walls. He raced nearly every sidekick there *and* Miruko so many times that he had no idea who had the highest score, but he knew the only ones really able to keep up with him in full shift were Muriko and the wolf hero- who he'd learned was called Kanin.

The rabbit hero also wasn't afraid of *punishing* him, which pissed the young fox off immensely. Anytime he fell back into referring to his 'full shift' as 'the fox' or hinted towards it being another entity, she made him run laps. *On human legs*. By the time lunch came around Katsuki's muscles were burning harder than they'd ever burned and he could hardly move without huffing out a groan of discomfort.

"You have fire around your paws and tails," Miruko observed when they stopped to break, leaning over Katsuki from where he was collapsed on the ground, heaving and puffing in exhaustion. She held a water bottle out for him and he gratefully took it. "Is it a defensive thing or can you control it?"

"Dunno," the hybrid shrugged, pausing to take a few long gulps as he sat up. "Never really tried either way. It leaves scorch marks so it's actual fire, but I've never tried using it in a fight."

She hummed, bobbing her head in interest and tapping her large foot on the ground as she thought. "We should try. I've got a sidekick with a phoenix quirk coming in later. He's mostly fireproof so we can test it then, see how much damage it can do or if you can control it. I'd say you could use it on me, but our healer is out today so I'd rather not risk too much injury. We can work on it more tomorrow."

"You've got a lot of animal quirks here," he observed, glancing around them and leaning his arms on his bent knees, grateful for the break to catch his breath.

"Mutation quirks are still pretty rare compared to emitter quirks," the rabbit hero shrugged, dropping herself onto the ground beside him and leaning back on her hands. Katsuki couldn't help but grumble at the fact that she'd just run four races in a row and was barely even winded. "Animal quirks are even more rare. It's harder for us to get ourselves into the rankings, especially the top ten. Our quirks aren't always as powerful as emitter quirks and a lot of times come with 'unappealing' side effects that the Commission and general public don't like."

Katsuki frowned, brows scrunching together as he glanced back towards the hero. “What do you mean?”

She hummed, tilting her head back until her long silver hair draped behind her like a waterfall. “Don’t tell anyone this, but Hawks for example has talons on his feet and tail feathers that he has to pluck. The Commission doesn’t think the public would like him as much if they saw his… more animalistic qualities.”

“He’s a fucking bird,” Katsuki argued, anger building in his chest in confusion.

“It’s not uncommon though,” she told him with an almost sad smile, turning her head towards him. “A lot of my sidekicks have things about their quirk they keep secret from the public. Kanin goes into heat once a month and has to take a week off of hero duty. Bengal wears a visor to cover her eyes because they're bigger than usual and kind of bulbus. It freaks people out. Even your classmate, the kid with the shadow demon thing? He’s going to have a tough time in the hero world just based on how he looks.”

It didn’t sit well with Katsuki. In fact it pissed him off beyond belief that the public could affect someone’s looks like that. Could judge them like that. “That’s fucking dumb.”

Muriko didn’t disagree, her eyes trailing up towards the ceiling where a woman with a lizard quirk was scaling the upsidedown obstacle course there. “It is. It’s fucking quirk discrimination is what it is, but it apparently can’t be helped. So I make it a point to only employ animal or mutation quirks here and Hawks does the same. As much as he can anyway. I want to give them a chance in the hero world where they can thrive because others are going to look at them and only see the downsides of their quirks.”

They fell silent for a while, sipping on water as Katsuki caught his breath. After a few minutes he shifted and stared off towards the far wall.

“It’s not really the same, but I guess I’m trying to do the same thing,” he mumbled quietly, not needing to look to know the woman’s red eyes were on him. “I’ve been in hiding my entire life. I only recently met my birth family and visited the place I’m from. Hybrids are nothing but meals to most of the yokai. They’re a game to chase around before devouring. Eraser said I’m the first one he’s ever known to actually make it to teenage years and that’s only because I had

people protecting me and we were really careful. Another member of my pack, Shinsou, is a hybrid too. He survived because his grandma was a priestess and protected him." He clenched his fists around the water bottle in his hands, twisting the cap on and off as he struggled with the wave of emotions in his gut. "Hybrids are usually really rare. They aren't born very often, probably because they die so much so the yokai are really careful about who they sleep with."

Miruko snorted before nodding. "I can imagine. Death makes a pretty good condom."

The blonde gave a mournful snort before sighing. "But things are changing. I can feel it. We've had two hybrids in the past decade and a half live long enough to *matter*, and from the sounds of it there are more coming or more already here. It doesn't sound like a lot but apparently it is. They don't have anyone to protect them like I did or Shinsou did. Who knows how many others *have* been born and didn't make it?"

"So you want to protect them."

It wasn't a question, but Katsuki couldn't help but nod anyway. "I'm not going to hide what I am anymore. I'm stronger now, I have a pack at my back to help me. I have some fancy blessing from a fucking god. So if anyone can help the ones that are out there on their own, it's going to be me."

"Is that why you want to be a hero?"

The question was one he'd been thinking of for a while now. Ever since he'd gotten to UA, since he'd met Shouto and Aizawa and Toshi… ever since he'd gained a pack and met his mother and gotten back from the Ikai… Ever since he'd spoke to the Inari. Things felt different now, his views were different, his beliefs. Katsuki's whole world felt like it was tilting in twenty different directions and every time he turned a corner he lost his footing. Something new or weird always happened and he didn't know how to deal with *new* and *weird.*

But despite all that, he still knew the answer.

"If you'd asked me a couple years ago I'd probably tell you no. I've always wanted to be a hero, ever since I knew what heroes were. I was determined to be the best because that's what I felt like I needed to be. Eventually it morphed into being a hero for Izuku, my boyfriend. We grew up together and he was quirkless so it fell on me to protect him until he learned to protect himself. I wanted us to be

the top hero duo in the world," Katsuki said with a grin at the memory. "Now though," he sighed, shaking his head. "Now it's all different. Now there's a god coming to me in my dreams telling me I was born to do something important. There's an entire world of supernatural demons thinking I'm either food or some holy blessing meant to bring them honor or some shit. But I just can't stop thinking about the other kids like me."

"So what do you want to do?"

Katsuki thought about it for a while, even though he didn't really need to. Still, the words were hesitant because he wanted to get them right. Wanted her to understand, wanted the world to understand, that he wasn't going to sit by anymore and be the prey.

"I want to be a hero for *everyone*," he said surely. "People with animal quirks, people with villainous quirks, people left behind by their own and hunted down for sport," he growled, turning his own red and gold eyes towards Miruko, seeing them reflect back a shimmering gold in her wide, proud stare. "I want to be the number one hero for *them*."

Something wicked and excited twisted onto the woman's handsome face and she held out a fist in his direction, laughing when he fist bumped her back. "Hell yeah, little kit! Let's fucking wreck this world's shit!"

Chapter End Notes

> Eeeke I love Miruko so much aldkjf ahdagh. She was kind of subdued in this chapter because of all the heavy topics being discussed, but we'll get to see her badass and sarcastic self more soon.
>
> Hope you guys enjoyed this! Kick ass and take names and don't forget your water!
>
> As a side note I definitely didn't have an ending planned at all for this story until like... today. Woops? It only took me 38 chapters to finally figure out where I'm going with this story XD We only have roughly three arcs left before it's done, but don't worry, there is still a lot to come before we finish! I have *plans* now and I'm stoked to get to them.
> (And I'm working on a chat fic that will be going through this story and maybe a bit after so you can keep up with that if you're feeling withdrawals from this story once it's over. :))

Chapter 39: Open Faucet

Chapter Summary

> Katsuki and the pack learn a lot on his second day of internships, Miruko is incredibly amused by everything, and Izuku may or may not cry by the time this is all over.

Chapter Notes

> So a lot happens in this chapter and I am just really excited about everything, but I'm hoping the pacing is alright. I feel like this chapter went by really fast, so if so, let me know! Also we'll see more of how internships are going with everyone else in the chat fic, but due to plot reasons we're mostly focusing on Katsuki for the internship arc, sorry!
>
> No trigger warnings for this chapter other than a VERY brief mention of Endeavor being a whore.
>
> Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Again.”

“This isn’t working!”

“Again.”

“You old hag, it isn’t-“

“Ah ah, rule number three.”

Muriko was a pretty laid back hero. She was chill, she was brash, and she was loud. Katsuki liked to think they had very similar personalities which was one of the reasons he liked her so much as a hero and mentor. Problem was, she was an absolute bitch.

In the best ways at least.

She did *not* let up at all. Training with her was brutal. It was close to the end of the second day and the boy had shifted between his human, hybrid, and full shift so many times he could hardly tell which one he was in at any given time. His muscles *ached* and his head was

pounding, but he couldn't deny that he felt *good*. Felt like he'd at least accomplished something even if he wasn't sure what it was.

Another problem though was that the rabbit hero had so many *rules*.

Rule number one had been established immediately: no talking about the fox like it was something else. The fox was him and he was being forced to accept that. He was also expected to be in at least half shift the entire time he was at the agency. No human shift allowed unless otherwise specified.

Rule number two: he is not allowed to shift back into his human form to communicate unless given permission.

Rule number three: Miruko's word is law. If she said again, then she meant again. And again. And *again*.

So Katsuki bit back the growl that was building in his throat and let himself fully shift again.

They'd been at it for hours, him training against Miruko or Kanin or Firebird. His pack wasn't around so Miruko thought it'd be a good idea to train the full shift for combat and rescue, getting him used to the feel of using the other form in non-life or death situations, getting him used to what the control felt like.

It was definitely weird.

In the beginning it was almost uncomfortable. Katsuki wasn't used to strangers seeing his fur or his tails. Even in the Ikai he hadn't been allowed in this form, yet now he was expected to strut around with all three tails out no matter what. And that was weird because on the one hand it was incredibly easy to finally let go of the control he had grown up needing, to let go and let the fox breathe. On the other hand he was *so used to hiding* that sometimes he didn't even notice he'd gotten rid of his extra features until Muriko knocked him on the back of the head and demanded to 'see them tails, bitch'.

Still, the more he trained and shifted, the more the fox… the more *Katsuki* felt natural in the form. The more it got easier to just kind of… exist inside his fur instead of hiding it under his skin.

It reminded him of days where he'd get home and instantly shift for a fox pile with the pack.

It was comfortable. Weird, sure, but nice in its own way.

Problem was he still wasn't able to control the fire that seemed to accompany his full shift.

"It's called fox fire," Firebird had told him when they'd shown up the second day after apparently delving into an entire night of research. "Not all Kitsune can wield it apparently, but it was another form of their self-defense. Or at least, that's what I could find. It's hard to tell what's myth and what's truth. We've already seen that it can grow bigger or smaller depending on how angry you are, but I *think* you should be able to control it to an extent as well judging by what I've researched."

The issue was, Katsuki *couldn't* control it. At least he couldn't in the past four hours they'd been tryin that second day of training. They tried over and over again- Katsuki attacking them, them attacking him, all the while trying to manipulate the fire around him to add to his attacks. But nothing seemed to work other than a slight flicker of flames.

"You're still treating it like it's not you," Miruko sighed after another failed attempt that ended with Katsuki sprawled out on his side. "You're accepting the full shift, but you're still thinking of all these little things like different pieces."

"You have to remember that this fire is just an extension of you," Firebird explained, raising their wings to show off the flames licking across them. "Like an arm or leg or tail. You're trying to force it into listening to you, but that's not how it works. You don't tell your arm to move when you reach out, you just do it. This fire is the same. It *is* you, it *is* yours. You just need to make it your own."

Make it your own.

Katsuki's brows furrowed slightly, head twitching and cocking slightly to the side as the words stuck in his brain.

"You have an idea." The kitsune glanced up, red-gold eyes landing on where Miruko was watching them, a curious grin on her face. "You just thought of something, what was it?"

"It might not work," Katsuki said, the words growled out between his maw. (And wasn't that weird? He wasn't used to the way the fox- the way *he*- spoke in full shift. It wasn't a movement of lips and teeth like he was used to, but more tongue and throat. Like a bird mimicking sounds it heard. The words were always low and gravelly, like he'd swallowed a handful of rocks or had smoke clogging up his lungs, but

no one seemed bothered by it.)

“But it could,” Miruko argued as she dropped down on the floor from her perch, kneeling beside where Katsuki sat up on his haunches. “What is it? It doesn’t hurt to try.”

Katsuki would have frowned if he could, but his tails flicked back and forth behind him as he thought.

There was a tiny idea of a plan in his head, something that probably wouldn’t work but that he’d been wondering about for a few weeks now. Something Aizawa and his mother had said back in the Ikai after the bonding ceremony.

It didn’t hurt to try.

“I need a second,” he said, slightly surprised when the woman didn’t even hesitate to agree and Katsuki planted his large paws flat to ground himself. His eyes slipped closed and he knew the mark on his forehead would be glowing a bright gold if the pack was there to see it. He stretched out his senses, feeling his fingers across the bond wrapped around his heart and tugged carefully.

They’d been practicing for a month now on speaking through the bond, but it was still a work in progress, still a strange feeling when he felt the ‘faucet’ open and the lovely chill of Shouto wash through his veins.

‘Katsuki? Is something wrong?’

Having either of his boyfriends in his head was kind of like a drug, Katsuki had decided early on. Their words were almost slurred and murky, the feeling of them through the bond fuzzy like warm house slippers and a weighted blanket. He wanted to loose himself in them, in the sensations that hummed just under his skin and wrapped around him like a much needed hug.

‘Katsuki?’

‘Are you busy?’

There was a moment of silence and he could feel the confusion through their bond, feel the way words wrapped around his tongue even though he wasn’t saying anything as the other boy excused himself from whatever it was he was doing. ‘*No,’* he finally responded. ‘*I’m at lunch. What do you need?’*

‘Miruko and I are training my full shift. I want to try something if you’re cool with it.’

Technically he knew he didn’t really need to ask. He knew Shouto wouldn’t mind either way, but there was something about the blonde digging into other people’s heads that he just didn’t like, even if they were pack. It was the same with the fog that he could see around them. The same in the sense that it felt like an invasion without permission.

‘*Oh.’* Came the surprised response. ‘*What did you have in mind?’*

‘I just want to keep the faucet open between us. I’m working on my fox fire and want to tap into your control.’

‘Do you think it’ll work like that? I trained most of my life to control my fire.’

Katsuki mentally shrugged to himself, shifting on his feet slightly. ‘*Doesn’t hurt to try.’*

With Shouto’s permission, he took a deep breath and focused on what Shouto felt like inside their bond. He ignored the lick of frost he usually felt, the chill on his tongue and the goosebumps that would have broken across him in his human shift. Instead he honed in on the heat that simmered in his chest, the lava that coursed through his veins and the taste of ash on his tongue.

‘Fire is not something you can simply bend to your will,’ Shouto’s voice slid through his mind, smooth as butter and warm on the back of the sensations. ‘*It’s wild and difficult to tame. You have to move with it rather than force it to move on its own. You have to trust it like you trust yourself.’*

The words sounded wise and strong, almost loving in the way Shouto said them. So different than how Katsuki imagined Endeavor to have taught.

‘*He trained me how to use the fire,’* Shouto answered the unasked question, and with the words came a wave of angry burning, which ebbed away to a cool ember in only moments. ‘*Touya was the one who taught me to control it.’*

So with a deep breath to stoke the flames, Katsuki rolled his shoulders and straightened up, eyes sliding open to focus on the enemies before him. Firebird and Miruko were watching with open interest as Katsuki

slipped back into his fighting stance, his paws slightly apart and his head lowered slightly. There were embers dancing across his tongue and slipping between his teeth as he growled, flames licking out of his mouth and surrounding each of his tails, leaving scorch marks wherever his feet touched. There was something excited in the rabbit hero's red eyes as she crouched, ready to spring at a moment's notice, and Firebird looked equally curious as their sharp black and red wings spread out behind them and their scaled feet braced against the floor.

Trust yourself.

Katsuki was moving before he really realized what he was doing.

There was a feral sort of energy in his blood, skittering through his bones like it had when he'd attacked Hideko or the nogitsune. The difference however was the steady anchor weighing him down, the heat in his throat and the weight of Shouto's open bond across his chest. He felt wild and he knew he still didn't have as much control over his full shift as he was used to, but it was better than the complete empty feeling he was used to in dire times.

Now he could feel his own feet on the various platforms as he chased the rabbit and bird around the obstacle course. He could feel the snap of his teeth around fabric as he tossed someone across the room. It was wild, but he was able to focus and breathe now. Able to force himself not to go straight for the throat. Instead he let the fire dance around him like a protective inferno, flaring up and swiping towards Miruko if she got too close, let his claws rake through the air when feathers drew too close for comfort. He let his instincts take over while still holding onto the weight of Shouto in his chest, in his mind, to remember not to go too far.

And Katsuki actually found himself having *fun*. Like actual fun with them, bouncing around the training room and chasing them like a fox and its prey. He even found himself chuffing out a laugh when he twisted in the air away from a particularly strong kick, making Miruko have to flounder away in order not to accidentally hit Firebird instead.

It was the most fun he'd had outside of the pack in a while and he was loving it.

Loving the feeling of the fire in his hands and the taste of frost in the back of his throat. Loved the strange sensation of Shouto's essence inside of him like a ghost under his skin.

That was until something sharp and almost painful sparked in his

palms. The shock of an explosion he wasn't expecting and the panic that rushed through their bond like a cold flood of iced water had him stumbling on his own feet, unable to block the next kick Muriko aimed for his ribs. Before he could really tell what was happening he was being sent flying across the room and crashing into a short wall, a wicked sounding yelp escaping his maw before he could stop it.

The pain was nothing compared to the shocked panic still racing in his chest.

"Woah, hey, what happened? You were doing great!"

Katsuki's fur was gone in an instant, disappearing the moment the bond in his chest closed off, and it left him feeling empty.
Alone. *Scared*.

"My phone," Katsuki croaked out, lips dry and voice like gravel. "I need my phone-"

It was pressed into his hand without argument, though he could see the hero wanted to ask if he'd given her the chance. Instead he was already dialing his boyfriend's number, ignoring the various surges of curiosity and worry that were coming from the others through his bond.

"*I'm okay!"*

"Shouto!" The blonde gasped, relief washing through him instantly at the sound of his boyfriend's voice, barely registering the words past the way they calmed the lump forming in his throat. "The hell happened? You were in pain and then you just cut off! I swear if that motherfucker did something to you I'm coming down there and blowing his face in-"

"*No-"* Shouto sounded breathless but not… not panicked like he was only seconds ago. Instead he sounded almost… excited? Or as excited as the boy could be with his usual emotionless demeanor. "*No, I'm sorry for worrying you! I just- Well- I may have blown up my tea on accident."*

That… was not what Katsuki had been expecting to hear, and he could tell by the amused expression on Muriko's face that she'd heard it too. His nose scrunched up as he tried to process exactly what Shouto was trying to say before he grunted. "What? Did me opening us up activate your fire or something?"

"*No! I mean I blew it up, Katsuki. I used your explosions!*"

Katsuki blinked in surprise, his eyes connecting with a wide eyed Miruko as he processed that. "You… used my explosion? And blew up a teacup?"

"*Yes!*"

"But you don't have explosions."

"Yes, Katsuki, thank you. I am aware of that. It wasn't nearly as strong as yours usually are. More like little fireworks, but they were definitely your explosions. I'd recognize them anywhere."

Katsuki did not have the time to dwell on the blush that dusted his cheeks at those words, instead focusing on the rabbit hero in front of him who was now speaking loud enough for the other boy to hear. "Has something like that ever happened before? I assume it had something to do with whatever idea you were trying out?"

The blonde nodded. "Our pack is bonded and we can sense each other, sort of. We can talk to each other in our heads too. It's complicated and new, we haven't really figured out exactly how it works yet. Eraserhead said it's possible that Shinsou and I could tap into each other's abilities because that's how his pack works, but it's weak and we didn't think… we didn't think it would work with the human members of our pack or our quirks. I never even thought about it."

The rabbit hero hummed and nodded her head. "But that's what you were just doing wasn't it? Tapping into Todoroki's fire?"

"I was tapping into his control," Katsuki corrected with a shake of the head. "He's used to using his, has more training than me. So I figured if I could kind of tap into his head, he could help me figure out what it felt like, figure out how to control my own even if it's different than his quirk."

"*And instead we actually tapped into each other's quirks? Is it possible you* were *using my fire?*"

Was it? Katsuki honestly hadn't noticed. His fox fire had only ever started appearing after the USJ when he'd gotten his second tail, and even then it'd only appeared when he was forced into the shift, when he was seconds away from killing someone. Even during his usual training with the pack he'd never really summoned it, or even thought about summoning it, until Miruko had asked earlier that day.

“I don’t know. I didn’t really notice,” he answered honestly.

“You had fire coming out of your mouth,” the hero informed him, tapping her chin and humming. “That hasn’t been something I noticed until you did whatever it is you just did. You kind of looked like a dragon, it was pretty fuckin’ cool honestly. But your flames were bigger than we’ve seen yet. Maybe it was kind of an exchange thing. Definitely something you guys need to look into. Especially if you’re going to be heroes.”

“*Do you think the others can do it too? And can I only use your explosions if you’re using my fire? Or can we use them at the same time?”*

Katsuki couldn’t help but snort at the question before shaking his head fondly. “I don’t fuckin’ know, Sho. It’s not like I’ve done this before.” He sighed, rubbing a hand over his tired eyes and groaning. “But I’m even more exhausted now than I was earlier. I’m gonna let you go so I can text the chat and let everyone else know we’re okay. And we should probably have a pack night tonight if we can.” He grunted as Miruko helped him up and started leading him towards the rest area at the side of the warehouse, all but shoving a water and protein bar into his lap.

"Tell them to come here," Miruko shrugged with an excited grin. "Place is big enough and it'll give all of you plenty of room to practice if you want without damaging your place or having to go to the school."

The blonde grunted at the idea and bobbed his head. "Did you hear that?"

"*Yes, I'll text the chat and let them know. Should I tell them what happened or wait?"*

"Go ahead and tell them," Katsuki answered with a snort. "Izuku's with Nezu right now so no doubt by the time you guys get here he'll have figured everything out on his own and we won't even *need* to practice. And tell eyebags to bring Dadzawa. He'll probably be useful too even if this isn't something fucking normal. Because why would anything we do be fucking normal?"

It wasn't until after they'd said their goodbyes and hung up that Katsuki turned to see Miruko's manic sort of smirk directed at him.

"What?" He snapped, only making that smirk widen until a loud, barking laugh exploded from her throat.

"Dadzawa?"

"Oh fuck off you hag!"

Despite Katsuki being absolutely fucking exhausted, they still went back to training after an hour break, though they made the decision to leave the fire training until Katsuki had a better handle on what exactly their bonds could to. He was still incredibly shocked at how well Miruko was taking everything in regards to him being a yokai, about the bonds and the possible sharing of quirks.

She took it in stride in a way he would only expect from someone who'd experienced the spirit world already, so he asked as they were out on their dinner run for pack night.

"My mom always believed in this stuff," she shrugged at his side as they traipsed through the city streets, arms full of pizza and drinks and on their way back to the agency where the Pack should already be waiting. "She used to tell me this story about when I was a kid, probably only like three or four. We'd gone camping, just us and my dad, out in the middle of bumfuck nowhere japan. I honestly don't remember any of it really."

Katsuki bobbed his head to show he was listening, grateful for their slow, leisurely pace since his legs were screaming at him to rest and even the stack of pizzas in his arms felt heavier than they should.

"Apparently I had decided to wander around. Bunnies like woods, you know? So I got to exploring, despite my mother's warning about staying close because there were animals in the woods that would eat little rabbits like me." Muriko didn't seem bothered by the fact, but she did seem a little reminiscent about the story, a soft sort of look in her eyes even if her ever-present grin was wide and sharp. "Anyway, it started raining halfway into my journey and I ended up getting myself lost. I thought I knew the way back since I was sure I hadn't gone far, but no matter where I turned, I couldn't find my mom. Like I said, I don't remember much, but I do remember there being a star in the distance or something like that. I ended up following it until I found this old abandoned temple and I hunkered down there until the rain stopped."

"A star?" Katsuki questioned, face scrunching up in confusion.

The rabbit hero shrugged, pausing long enough to crouch near a homeless man and offer him a few slices of pizza which he took gratefully. Katsuki waited patiently for her to stand before motioning

for her to continue.

“All I know is that my mom had a dream about the temple that night after she and my dad hunkered down for the storm. The next morning she comes running in and I’m curled up on the floor, dry and tucked into the side of a fox that was way too big to be just a normal old animal, right? Naturally my mom freaked out because foxes eat bunnies,” Muriko smirked, turning her gaze towards Katsuki as if she was daring him to try something, only to receive an eye roll in return. “But the fox just nudged me towards her and, according to my mother, turned and walked right through the doorway and disappeared.”

The story was lacking a lot of details, but Katsuki hummed and narrowed his eyes. “Probably went back into the Ikai. That’s the spirit realm. We went once with the pack and we got there through the doorway of a temple.”

The taller woman bobbed her head in agreement. “Maybe? No idea! But ever since my mom has been super into all this stuff. She said the weather had gotten really bad that night after I disappeared and she was afraid I wouldn’t have survived it on my own. Says if I didn’t find that temple, or if the fox hadn’t kept me warm, that I probably would have frozen to death.” The blonde blinked in surprise and Miruko snorted in amusement as she turned down the alley towards the agency. “She set up a shrine in our house after that in thanks to the fox spirit, even though we didn’t know what or who it was.”

“So that’s why you believe in all this stuff?” The boy questioned as he followed quickly, narrowing his eyes at the way Miruko balanced her pizzas in one hand so the palm scanner for the agency could read her other.

“I’ll be honest, I definitely didn’t believe her at all up until yesterday,” the rabbit hero said a bit sheepishly. “But it’s hard not to believe it when you’ve got a giant fox for an intern who’s saying everything your mom has ever told you is true. You should meet her actually, she’d be so excited.”

And Katsuki had no idea what to do with that information, so instead he kept his mouth shut, sliding past her to shoulder the door open and hold it for the taller woman as she ducked in behind him.

And true to Miruko’s word, the large warehouse was the perfect size for their large (and apparently growing) pack as well as the few

sidekicks who'd decided to stick around for the fun and food. (Namely just Kanin and Firebird, though there were a few who were coming in and out from patrols that stopped by to say hello).

Still, seeing his pack laughing and messing around on the various obstacle courses in the warehouse warmed something in his chest and throat that felt disgustingly like love. Muriko could only laugh at their antics as Mina and Denki began a race on the ropes hanging from the ceiling, only for the latter to miss a grip and come screeching down into Firebird's waiting arms. The loud, boisterous sound of her cackle drew their eyes towards the two new comers and eight pairs of eyes lit up in excitement.

"Kaachan!"

Katsuki barely had a chance to pass the pizza over to Miruko before he was bombarded with an armful of green curls, letting out a loud '*oof*' as he stumbled slightly at the new weight. He moved to wrap his arms around the other boy only to frown in confusion when Izuku pulled away.

"Kaachan look! Look! Ready?"

The excitement on Izuku's face was practically blinding and Katsuki had to force himself not to shield his eyes, instead focusing on the hand that the greenette was holding up in his face. There was a long moment of silence and intense concentration on his boyfriend's face, long enough that the others were wandering up behind them, their own eagerness evident on their faces, before it finally happened.

It being the ripple of skin over Izuku's hand, like the cracking of rocks and the hardening of stone. And it *was* the hardening of stone. Katsuki would recognize Eijiro's quirk anywhere, but seeing it on Izuku was… well weird as fuck.

"I have a *quirk!"* the greenette practically screeched, hugging Katsuki again before pulling away just as fast to show the others. "I mean technically I don't, it's still only because of our bond I think that I'm even able to do this. And honestly I probably won't be able to use anyone else's quirk except maybe Toshi's or Mei's because *technically* my body is still quirkless," the boy was babbling, hardened hands waving around wildly as he spoke. "So using Kaachan or Shouchan's quirks would probably really hurt and Hanta's quirk is probably impossible for me to use at all since I don't have the elbows for it. Actually I don't know if any of us could use his quirk, sorry Hanta.

And Denki's quirk would probably wreck my brain even more than his own. But isn't this great," he continued, only pausing long enough to suck in a desperate breath, not fighting back when Katsuki smirked and started lead him back towards the center of the open room. "Like yeah, it'll be really hard for us in the beginning because like, we aren't used to other people's quirks and keeping the bond open that long is tiring, but imagine when we get stronger and have more control over it and become pros? We'll be unstoppable. At least unless Dadzawa decides to go up against us. Speaking of, I know it's not technically a quirk, but I wonder if Dadzawa erases Eiji's quirk, if I can still use it? Or any of the others can use it?"

"Wow, okay," Miruko snorted at Katsuki's side. "This kid's a fucking ball of energy isn't he?"

"Katsuki calls him Bunny when we're alone," Shouto smirked from his other side, earning him a sharp elbow to the ribs, but the words only brought another loud laugh out of the woman and something about it settled happily in his chest. Like she was meant to be here with them, training him, watching over them.

Katsuki couldn't help but be grateful to whatever Kitsune had found her as a child and saved her life.

"Do you think I can create electric acid?"

"Denki no!"

"Denki yes!"

Chapter End Notes

> I honestly love Miruko with my entire being and I didn't mean to add her into plot stuff but I definitely made that last minute decision and I'm living for it. I don't know how often yet she'll be showing up in this fic after this but she'll probably be in the chat fic a lot after this. Woohoo!
> Next chapter is the last day of internships and some excitement in Hosu!
> ALSO THANK YOU SO MUCH TO ALL OF YOU AMAZING LITTLE BABY GOBLINS AND YOUR KIND COMMENTS AS;DFJA;LGJ I'M DYING THANK YOU!!!
> Eat something green I guess? And drink your water because you are loved!!!

Chapter 40: UPDATE

Chapter Summary

Not a real chapter sorry guys!

THIS IS NOT A REAL CHAPTER JUST AN UPDATE BECAUSE I'M A DUMBASS AND FORGOT TO PUT IT IN THE NOTES FOR THE LAST CHAPTER. I totally created a chat fic to acompany this story if you want to read it! It'll be going on with AFWHE starting after the Prank month chats (so chapter 38 and onward). Not every chapter will accompany an AFWHE chapter, there will be some that are just random chats or shenanigans, but if they accompany a specific chapter, I'll put it in the description. You DONT have to read the chat fic if you don't want to! It's mostly just background fun and there will be no major plot stuff happening in it. It might be referenced and we'll see some extra backstory on things happening, but it's not necessary to read. IF anything important happens in the chat fic, then I'll be sure to put it in the notes here so you guys know about it. Maybe just a "last time in the chat fic" thing at the end or something. IDK yet. ANYWAY, PLEASE ENJOY WHILE I WORK ON THE NEXT CHAPTER OF THIS!

CHAT FIC

Chapter 41: Don't Forget

Chapter Summary

The Hosu Incident.

Chapter Notes

This chapter is a little shorter than I honestly wanted it to be, but I'm awful at writing fight scenes so *shrugs* what can ya do? Anywayyyy I'm building up more plot stuff and I am so excitedddddd.
Please enjoy my breadcrums!

TRIGGER WARNINGS:
Lots of violence and some gore towards the end of this chapter. Just be aware!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Miruko! Miruko! Over here! Is this your intern? What made you want to take an intern this year when you haven’t done so before?”

“Ah, you know? I just had a feeling this one was gonna be great! And turns out I was right ‘cause this kids a fuckin’ riot! Better watch your back All Might, one day Ground Zero is going to be sittin’ in that pretty seat you’re warming up!”

“Ground Zero! Can we get a comment? What’s it like working with the Rabbit Hero Muriko? Does her choosing you have anything to do with this mysterious second quirk you’ve acquired? How did she know about it if you didn’t use it at the sports festival?”

“Fuck you ask a lot of questions- ow, don’t hit me you hag!”

“Then behave you brat, you’re on live tv! Answer the question!”

“Muriko’s one of the best so of course it’s great working for her. She didn’t know I could shift like that until the internship, so no *she didn’t fuckin’ choose me because of that. And it’s not a quirk, it’s just me.”*

“What do you mean by that?”

“What I fuckin’ said. Ow! Okay- okay! Jeez, you’re gonna gimme a fuckin’ concussion!”

“Just answer the questions, Zero, and we can bounce!”

“I’m half yokai, half human. The fox shift is just something I can do, okay? It’s not a fuckin’ quirk.”

“Sorry guys, that’s it for now! After the mess that today was we’ve got a lot to do! Time to show the kid the best part of the job! Paperwork.”

“Oh hell *no.”*

“Ground Zero!”

“Ground Zero, what did you mean you’re a yokai?”

“Ground Zero, are you saying you’re part demon? Aren’t those just part of mythology?”

“Are you calling yourself a god, Ground Zero?”

“Ground Zero over here!”

“Ground Zero, are other demons walking among us?”

“Ground Zero!”

Earlier…

The third day of internships started with an entire pot of coffee and the annoyance that was Miruko invading their pack chat. Not to mention the fact that she wouldn’t stop jabbering about Shouto’s sister their entire walk from the Agency to the train.

It was annoying.

Point was, Katsuki was tired and cranky, and it didn’t help that everyone else was too so he could feel all their connections through the bond, which only increased his own annoyance. Thankfully Miruko kept her mouth shut about it and didn’t bring up the fact that they probably shouldn’t have stayed up until 3 am the night before (especially when Katsuki usually had a very *strict* sleep schedule). He had a suspicion he knew it was because they’d actually been figuring stuff out, actually been training, instead of just goofing around.

Still, he kind of wish they’d waited to do pack night until after internships were over. He was already exhausted enough from the

torture Miruko put him through the past few days.

“Where are we going?”

“Hosu,” Miruko grinned. “Since I’m an independent agency, I can pretty much patrol wherever, but we usually stick to places around this prefecture. My interns mostly watch over this area, and I take Hosu. It’s mostly because that’s where Endeavor is and I don’t really trust him around my interns, you know? So I tend to do the patrols around there instead. Hey speaking of, isn’t your little boyfriend interning there? I thought he hated his dad?”

Just the thought of Endeavor brought anger boiling to the surface just under Katsuki’s skin and he could feel the lick of Shouto’s fire across his mask for just a moment before the wind blew it away. Miruko only raised an eyebrow at the sight and Katsuki sneered.

He hadn’t been happy at all when Shouto told them about his plans. He didn’t *trust* Endeavor and the burn scar in the shape of a hand on his throat was a pretty good indication as to why. Even if his hero costume covered it up, he knew Miruko had seen it during training, though she never brought it up.

“He’s trying to learn better control over his fire,” Katsuki grumbled as they boarded the train, only pausing long enough to glare at a camera shoved in his in Miruko’s face before pushing their way towards the other door to stand and wait. “He’s actually interning with Burnin’. Momma Inko made sure the garbage can wouldn’t even get on the same floor as Shouto without prior notice.”

The rabbit hero hummed and bobbed her head, her large foot tapping along with the music in some kid’s headphones a few seats away. “How’s it goin’ then? He learning from her pretty good? I’ve met Moe before, she’s pretty cool.”

Katsuki shrugged. “Guess so. We’ve all been pretty tired when we get home so we haven’t really talked about internships much. He seems fine with the arrangement though.”

Hosu was a busy area. Katsuki hadn’t been there since they’d visited Endeavor’s agency to liberate Shouto, and before that it wasn’t since a school trip to an aquarium when they were six. But it pretty much looked just like all the other places he’d been. Crowded streets, curious stares, stupid people who *wouldn’t keep their hands to themselves.*

It was moments like this where Katsuki hated Miruko's rules with a passion because even out in public she was demanding he keep in his half shift instead of his human shift.

"You'll get used to it," Miruko snorted when Katsuki bristled as *another* extra decided to casually pet one of his tails as he passed by. "It's rude and it pisses you off, but you'll get used to it. Pretty much any of us with an animal quirk has to deal with it."

"It's fuckin' gross. I don't like other people touching me," he hissed, shooting a glare at a hand that was reaching out only for the woman in question to squeak and pull away from him.

The rabbit hero shrugged, looking exasperated at the topic, but not at him. "It is and most of us don't. Hawks is number three and he gets it all the time too. It's even worse for him sometimes because some people, mostly kids, think they can pluck one of his feathers to keep." Katsuki couldn't help but shiver at the thought and she nodded in agreement. "Yeah, it's different for all of us, but for the most part it's just something you'll have to get used to. People are going to ask to touch them all the time and you're going to have to either learn how to tell them no *politely* or you're going to have to let them. Especially since you have three tails already and might get even more. They're not exactly easy to hide."

Katsuki grunted, but didn't argue because technically he *could* hide them, but that would go against the hero's rules and defeated the purpose of why he took this internship in the first place. Still, it didn't mean he had to *like* it when people got their grubby fingers all over his fur. He supposed he was lucky at least that they weren't able to touch his ears without him noticing ahead of time. He wasn't sure if he'd be able to stop himself from biting someone's hand off for trying. Literally.

"So what, we just walk around like idiots all day until something happens?" Katsuki questioned, changing the subject even as he shifted a tail away from another curious hand. (Though this time he didn't glare at them so… progress?)

Miruko's laugh echoed around them and she slung a heavy, muscled arm over the blonde's shoulders, almost too much of a bounce in her step for how short Katsuki was, so he was left pushed a bit more into her armpit than was probably intented. Whatever.

"That's pretty much what patrol is, kiddo! We keep our ears out for

any trouble, help out around town where we can, and hope no villains are planning anything nefarious!"

The boy's face scrunched up in confusion and he glared up at the woman. "We hope they aren't doing anything? That's fuckin' boring! I wanna fight some villains!"

"I like your enthusiasm kid, but think about it," Miruko argued, a smirk on her face that told him she knew exactly what he was feeling because she had the same thought. "Fighting bad guys is fuckin' great and a lot of fun, but it also puts other people in danger. We're heroes because we want a world where there are no bad guys to fight, right? We want to keep people safe, and they're safe if there are no villains. Unfortunately that's not really possible because people and society fuck shit up. So we just hope that villains don't come out to do anything stupid because that means innocent people are in danger."

And yeah, Katsuki could see how that's true, even if he didn't want to admit it.

So he reluctantly followed Miruko's lead. Which, by the way, was fucking difficult because the bitch was *fast* when she was in the streets. Training Muriko was *nothing* compared to actual top 10 pro hero Muriko. Katsuki had to full shift just to keep up with her the second her long ears picked up any sign of trouble. Luckily, there didn't seem to be a lot of it- trouble, that is. The city was pretty quiet, which according to the rabbit hero was usually pretty common around Hosu. Not a lot of villains had the balls to traipse around Endeavor's city and the fact that there were two pro's in the area at most times tended to keep them from getting too cocky. And yeah, part of Katsuki was glad that it was rather quiet because he still wasn't completely confident that he wouldn't straight up murder someone in his full shift on accident, but the other part of him was antsy and ready for a fight.

The fox- *Katsuki*- was used to his other form now. Or at least, used to it enough that he could feel the fur itching at his skin asking to come out to play.

It got bad enough that he spent the hour before lunch time in his full shift, all but stalking along at Miruko's side like he didn't have a care in the world. The rabbit hero didn't bring it up, which he appreciated, but she did laugh whenever they'd turn a corner and surprise a random passerby. She also teased him when he dipped onto his belly when a little girl stumbled up to him, her own orange tail tucked between her legs, and *very* politely asked if she could give him a hug.

Granted, he'd grumbled and rolled his eyes about it, but he still ducked down and huffed when the child wrapped her arms around his massive neck before backing up a step.

"She's never seen a fox hero before," her mother smiled, patting her daughter on the head, the woman's own ears stark against her tan hair.

Katsuki could tell the kid wasn't a kitsune like him and just had an animal quirk, but she looked so excited and shy at the same time that he couldn't help but snuff at her hand and make her giggle. In an attempt not to scare the kid with his smoke-infested voice, he shifted back into his half-shift to talk. He was still crouched in front of the kid, his tails flicking lazily behind him as she stared in awe, and he snorted. "The name's Ground Zero, kid," he told her, reaching up to ruffle the kid's hair with a smirk. "Remember that, because I'm gonna be number one pretty soon."

After another hug, which Katsuki *definitely* didn't smile at, and a signature in the little girl's hero notebook, they were back on their way. And something felt lighter in his chest… Something he didn't really recognize or know what to do with, but he did know he'd remember little Yumi for years to come. You never forget your first fan after all. (Also he's almost *positive* he can threaten Miruko into giving him a copy of the photo he knew she snuck.)

The day continued on pretty slowly after that. There were a few robberies here and there, some street fights they had to break up and a single purse snatching that Katsuki got to lead on- not that it'd really been that big of a deal as he'd managed to catch the guy in less than five seconds in his full shift.

They'd even taken a break to have lunch with Shouto and Burnin' since apparently her and Miruko were sort of friends, so that was nice. Though Katsuki was a little upset that Shouto had managed to get the picture of him and Yumi from Muriko without even *asking* and it was now saved as his phone background.

"We'll get a copy printed for the fridge," the dual-haired hero had stated with a fond smile. "Mom will be really proud of you."

All in all it seemed like a boring day, but Katsuki was still grateful for the ease into hero work that he'd gotten. Sure, he would have liked to blow up some *actual* bad guys, but he at least had the satisfaction of knowing they'd put a few guys away *and* he'd made a fan on his first

official day of hero work. (He uses the term “official” loosely since he doesn’t *technically* have his hero license yet.)

So it was admittedly a shock when the sun had started going down and something completely stopped Katsuki in his tracks.

“Ground Zero? What is it?”

Miruko’s voice was a bit muffled in his ears and Katsuki frowned, eyes going a bit distant as he tried to focus on what it was exactly that had made him stop.

A scent maybe? No, the only thing he could smell was the onigiri down the street and the three stray cats in the side alley a block away.

Someone’s fog? No, he’d gotten used to blocking that out unless it was particularly strong and he didn’t see anyone that particularly drew his attention.

A sound? Maybe… there was something in the distance, a flapping maybe? A pounding of feet? He couldn’t be sure, but it was something else that had gotten his attention. Something stronger that he could feel in the heart of his fox.

“Ground Zero?”

“There’s another yokai here.” He didn’t know why he said it or how he knew, but the words were true and all of his senses were suddenly on high alert. It was the same sort of sensation he got when the Inari was with him, the feel of its hands on his face and its arms around his chest. The whisper of something in his ear that he couldn’t quite hear but knew the meaning of. The Inari was telling him something, showing him that someone else was there… someone like him. “It’s another hybrid, I can feel them but it’s like they’re… they’re distant. Really far away and weak. Or- not weak,” he corrected, shaking his head as he tried to fucking *focus* but the distant sounds of pounding feet and flapping wings were growing louder and louder. “It’s like me and Violet Haze when we didn’t have a pack. Like the yokai side is weaker.”

Miruko didn’t bother asking him if he was sure. It was obvious he was, even if he didn’t quite understand *how* he knew or *what* it was he was feeling.

Unfortunately neither of them had time to dwell on it when an explosion of frost danced across Katsuki’s arms and something loud

crashed in the distance.

They both glanced down at the ice on Katsuki's fingertips before Katsuki muttered a quiet, "Shouto" and took off in a sprint. The ice flaked off as his skin shifted into fur and he collapsed onto all fours, bouncing off various cars or sides of buildings in an attempt to avoid the crowds with his large form. (Luckily for him they tended to jump out of the way when they saw a bear sized fox streaking in their direction.)

Miruko matched his speed effortlessly, her own ears twitching and picking up a cacophony of sounds, her eyes serious even if there was a wicked grin on her face. Katsuki couldn't help but bare his teeth in his own imitation of a smile at the thought of an actual *fight*.

'*Be careful, Katsuki,'* Shouto's voice slid into his mind with a growing ease. He sounded calm, but Katsuki could hear the strain in his tone and it sent his nerves on edge. '*It's nomu. A lot of them.'*

"Rabbit," Katsuki growled between his teeth, his speech in this form still a bit stilted and difficult to maintain, especially when he was focusing on other things. Still, her attention shot to him and his hardened eyes. "It's Nomu."

"Shit. How many?"

He skidded on his paws as they turned a corner before sprinting off again, focusing on the information Shouto was feeding through the bond. "Too many. Shouto can see at least three but there are other areas of the city being hit-" a loud explosion interrupted his words, much too close to the two of them, and Katsuki barely had time to snatch Miruko out of the way before another explosion of fire spat in their direction.

It was definitely a Nomu.

The thing was taller and skinnier than the last one he'd seen at the USJ, but just as ugly with its bulbous eyes and it's exposed brain. There were flames licking up its arms and spitting out from between its gnashing teeth.

Distantly he could hear Miruko calling for backup in her hero comms, asking any heroes near Hosu to come immediately. And he could feel the panic and worry surging through his bonds as his and Shouto's adrenaline flooded through like a rapid river current. Their voices were loud and muffled in Katsuki's mind but he didn't have time to

focus on them, didn't have time to answer any of their questions beside shoving a loud '*shut the fuck up we're working*' in their general bond directions.

Because Katsuki needed to focus.

He didn't remember fighting the last Nomu with All Might, but he knew he didn't come out of it great. Recovery Girl said he'd had a few broken ribs, a shattered collarbone, and a fractured jaw by the time she'd gotten to him. And that was only distracting it to help All Might. Now he was expected to actually *fight* one and he couldn't help but feel like he was *not ready*.

"Ground Zero," Miruko called over the loud noise of chaos around them, stepping up at his side and dropping into a ready crouch, her smile wide and excited. "You have my permission as your mentor to defend yourself and the civilians. But I am putting you on damage control," she ordered, her tone leaving no room for argument. "Others are on their way. I'll take this guy, you make sure no one gets hurt in our way, got it?"

Though part of him really wanted to argue and tell her he was fine to fight the thing, the other part of him knew he really *wasn't*. He was barely in control of his full shift and while he was an expert with his explosions, they could only serve to do more damage in this compact of a space and might do more harm to the civilians still freaking out in the middle of the street.

So he nodded and braced his paws sturdy on the ground, waiting until the rabbit hero literally launched herself into the fight with the Nomu before moving.

Luckily for him, most of the civilians were so focused on the creepy brain monster that they didn't put up much of a fight when a giant fox came crashing towards them, knocking them onto his back or into his jaws to get them away from the bursts of fire being sent their way.

The scent of burnt fur was sharp in his nose, but he ignored it as he shifted back into his half form just in time to snatch a baby out of its carrier before it was torched. A woman with green skin was wailing at him from the other side of the street so he dropped the kid off in her arms before directing them towards where there weren't sounds of fighting.

'*Shouto, update?*'

‘Endeavor and Edgeshot are here with their sidekicks. These Nomu are different though. They have multiple quirks.’

‘Multiple-‘

“Rabbit!”

Katsuki was moving before he really understood what it was he was seeing. He honestly wouldn’t have noticed if he wasn’t so familiar with Denki’s quirk, but the red sparks of lightning around the creature’s body was almost blending in with the fire, building up like it was getting ready for something big and Miruko didn’t *see it.*

‘*Denki, I need you. Don’t know if this is going to work but be ready.’*

He didn’t get a reply, but he could feel the bond between them shoot open instantly and Katsuki was shoving his way in front of Miruko, taking the brunt of the next attack.

Like he’d expected, there was a violent shock of electricity riding along the back of the fire and Katsuki felt himself seize up at the suddenness of it. It didn’t hurt as much as he’d been expecting however, instead surging through him and echoing through the bond to Denki like a telephone pole. The other boy absorbed the attack effortlessly and he felt it fizzle away like a static in the air as he stumbled back to his feet.

“Zero! What the hell?”

“He’s got multiple quirks,” the kitsune responded, his voice rougher than usual. “The other one is electricity.”

He heard the woman curse as she skirted around the thing to start the fight back up, now more aware and careful of the tiny lightning bolts skittering across it’s ugly skin. “You okay?”

Katsuki grunted, shaking out the sudden stiffness of his limbs before nodding. “Fine. Chargebolt helped out. Fuck- we’ve got more civillians incoming from Shouto’s direction. Try to get that thing somewhere more open!”

The fight was exhausting in a way that training hadn’t been. While Katsuki knew there were other Nomu around, he and Miruko kept their attention on the one in their area, trusting the other heroes to deal with the rest of them. (And from the infrequent updates from Shouto through their bond, Katsuki knew they had plenty of help.)

Katsuki felt like he couldn't even *think* about staying still for a second, bouncing between getting extras out of the way and knocking the Nomu back towards where Miruko wanted it to be.

At some point, when Katsuki was half shifted and flying away a man who'd been stuck inside his car, Hitoshi's voice slid through his mind and asked what was happening. Apparently he'd managed to convince everyone else to shut up and let them focus, but the anxieties were high while they all watched the various news channels nervously for updates. The most he was able to do at the time was tell them they were fine and if anything changed, they'd know.

Apparently Shouto was trying to keep them updated as well as he could.

'*Kat open up.'*

'You sure?'

'Just do it!'

Shouto's voice was practically seething with an exhaustion and frustration that Katsuki could feel in his bones, but still he opened up the floodgates between them and felt the sparks of explosions against palms that weren't his, smelt the tinge of burning flesh in a nose that wasn't his.

'*Aim for the brain. It's a soft spot.'*

"Fuck yeah," Katsuki grinned, silently thanking Shouto for the information before launching himself back at the Nomu. Miruko had dropped back to catch her breath, blood seeping from cuts on her arms and cheeks, her costume burnt into the skin of her ribs, but she stepped aside just as Katsuki went streaking past, using his full shift to launch himself at the thing's head before shifting back just in time to fire off a few pressured explosions into the exposed brain of the creature.

By the time he'd skidded to his feet on the other side of it his ears were ringing and his chest heaving as he struggled to breathe something that wasn't ash.

The Nomu didn't move, didn't fight back or launch towards Miruko again. It just stood there, it's eyes wide and staring, brains and blood and ash leaking around its face in a way that made Katsuki really, *really* want to puke. After a few more seconds of echoing silence and

ringing, the Nomu slumped and crashed to the ground at the rabbit hero's feet. Unmoving.

Miruko was talking, her voice muffled enough that Katsuki had to adjust the hearing aids Hatsume had finally finished for him before he was able to hear her cheering and wooping and her "holy shit, Zero that was so fuckin' cool! How'd you even fuckin' know that was going to work?"

Katsuki snorted at her excitement, but still reached up to give her a fist bump when she held one out for him. "Shouto tried it first."

"Man, ya'll are really picking up on this whole sharing quirks things. You said Chargebolt helped too right? He's the electric kid?"

The blonde nodded as they started evacuating the area again, keeping people away from the dead Nomu just in case. "Didn't really use his quirk as much as I did syphon the electricity into him. Like a grounding rod I guess. Opening up is easier than using them."

"Still fuckin' impressive!"

'*The Nomu are down,'* Shouto interrupted, and Katsuki paused to glance back towards the smoke and flames in Shouto's direction. '*I'm on damage control right now in putting out the flames. Endeavor just got word that the other two nomu are down too. How is yours?'*

'Taken out. We're evacuating the area now but could definitely use some damage control with the flames over here.'

'I'm on my way.'

"Shouto said the rest of the Nomu are down. He's on his way to put out these fires. Fuck, I am so sleeping for an entire week after this."

Miruko barked out a laugh and rubbed her sharp knuckles into the top of his head. "Hey, you did good kid! You're welcome at my agency any time you feel like training again. Don't be shy in visiting, but don't think the day is over yet because we still have the two best parts left."

The hybrid groaned, shoving his hands into his eyes and shaking his head. Somehow he knew she was being sarcastic. "Ugh, and what's that?"

He followed her long finger towards the new crowd in the distance,

their flashing lights reflecting off her sharpened bunny teeth. “Number one? The press!”

“Fuck.”

Katsuki was tired and pissed and sore… and in his muddled head he knew there was something he was forgetting. Something important, just niggling in the back of his mind like a particularly annoying bug… but for the life of him he couldn’t remember what it was.

A camera flashes and Katsuki glares at it.

“Miruko! Miruko! Over here! Is this your intern? What made you want to take an intern this year when you haven’t done so before?”

Chapter End Notes

Weeeeeeee so exciting!
Like I said, I am skipping the whole Stain incident in this story. Mostly because it's not important to my plot or characters. In my head Iida didn't even go with Manual to Hosu because he didn't need revenge. His brother probably talked him out of it or something. Idk. Anyway, it didn't happen so don't worry about it!

DRINK YOUR WATER
Also chat fic below!
https://archiveofourown.org/works/30388026/chapters/74918262

Chapter 42: An Interview

Chapter Summary

The boys deal with the aftermath of Katsuki's confession and take a new step in their relationship.

Chapter Notes

This chapter is kind of a bit of an interlude just quickly dealing with the aftermath of Katsuki's confession last chapter! It'll still be brought up more, don't worry. There's a lot they're going to have to deal with because of Katsuki announcing to the world he was a yokai, but this is basically the beginning.
Also I felt like we really needed some fluff at the end because the boys have been through a lot recently. So, that being said...
This chapter also ended up being way longer than normal because of the extra scene at the end. So yeah, hope that's okay! XD
*** WARNING WARNING WARNING ***
For those of you uncomfortable with it, there is smut at the end of this chapter. It'll pretty much be the entire end of the chapter, so just skip the rest when you get to the smut warning after the break. I don't get like, hella detailed into anything, and it's just oral, but it's there if you want to avoid it.

Anyway, enjoy!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“The incident in Hosu was devastating, but luckily there were no casualties and the injuries were kept to a minimum! I think the most exciting thing that came out of the whole ordeal however was the two young interns we caught a glimpse of during the incident! Lucky for us, we managed to snag just a little bit of their time out of class to come speak with us on what happened! Please help me welcome UA hero students, Ground Zero and Shouto, and their mentors, number 7 hero, Miruko and number 60 hero, Burnin’!”

Katsuki was uncomfortable. Shouto didn’t need the bond between them to tell that. Unlike himself, who had grown up with cameras constantly in his face and interviews on what it was like to be Endeavor’s son, Katsuki had never once been on camera before and Shouto could see the discomfort in his face. See it in the way his eyebrows scrunched up and his arms crossed tight and tense across his

chest.

Thankfully the television host, Kei Nguyen, had put Shouto in the first seat since it was clearly obvious he was used to this. Katsuki sat next to him, a bit closer than a normal friend might but Shouto didn't care, and Miruko and Burning were on a secondary couch next to them. He knew they were mostly there as the adults in the situation since Katsuki and he were still minors. And he knew Aizawa, Izuku and Moma Inko were just off the side of the stage, the older yokai stewing in anger because he didn't think this was *necessary* but the Commission had insisted after the recordings of the Hosu incident had started trending on twitter.

Katsuki wasn't happy about it either.

"We are glad to be here," Shouto said, deadpan as ever, not that it seemed to bother the host.

"So polite," Nguyen grinned before leaning forwards slightly on his desk. Katsuki was fidgeting with the small mic attached to his hero costume, only stopping when Miruko reached a foot over to kick him subtly. The audience laughed. "Now! Let's get into this interview why don't we? You two are both first years at UA, are you not?"

Knowing better than to let Katsuki answer, Shouto bobbed his head and kept most of the attention on himself. "We are. This was our first internship after the sports festival."

"And what an internship it was! What was it like being up and in the action next to all those pros? I heard not only did your father stop by to help, but Edgeshot too! There were even rumors of Best Jeanist being near the area!"

Shouto frowned as he wracked his brain. "I do not recall seeing Jeanist anywhere, but there were many Nomu we were fighting. Endeavor and Edgeshot were very impressive. They usually are."

"You call them Nomu, any new on what they actually are?"

Miruko chimed in at that, her grin sharp as she informed the host that all information on the creatures was currently under investigation and they weren't allowed to talk about it. Shouto didn't mind since he honestly wouldn't be able to answer the question past the fact that they were creatures made to kill All Might and had multiple quirks, both bits of information the Commission did *not* want the public knowing.

The Host seemed to expect the answer, waving it away before quickly moving on with a ‘camera smile’. “No issue at all, Miruko! We have plenty more to talk about and I know all of our viewers are just itching to get to the good stuff anyway! Specifically this clip we have here of Shouto killing one of these ‘Nomus’. Let’s take a look!”

The four of them on the couch turned towards one of the screens nearby, the clip blown up for all to see. It was the same video that Hanta had shown him that morning, the entire pack a mix of worry and excitement about the previous day’s events. Honestly, Shouto didn’t think it was all that impressive considering how uncoordinated he was in it. But everyone else seemed to disagree.

The video was like most during a disaster. It was shakey, kind of blurry, though this one was admittedly very close to the action. Close enough that it was very clear when Shouto shot himself up the Nomu’s back with his ice only to propel himself over it with a hesitant explosion in one hand, his other hand outstretched to jam another explosion into its brain. He crashed and rolled to the ground on the creature’s other side, hidden slightly from the camera as he stumbled back up to his feet.

Like he said, not very graceful. But it had worked.

“Now, correct me if I’m wrong here, Shouto, but your quirk is called half-cold, half-hot, is it not?”

Shouto nodded. “It is.”

Katsuki snorted at his side at the answer, but Shouto knew what game the Host was playing and was unfortunately familiar with it enough to play along. And the host seemed ever eager to do so.

“So, tell us, how is it you’ve managed to use your quirk to mimic Ground Zero’s attacks?”

Luckily for Shouto, they’d discussed all of this prior to the interview, the entire pack meeting up in Nezu’s office with Aizawa, Burnin’, Fuyumi, and Muriko all present for the discussions. After what Shouto had done and Katsuki’s decision to go public on his heritage, it was imperative they make a decision on how to proceed in the future, especially now with their abilities being able to be borrowed and interchanged. It was a big step and they all knew they’d be getting a lot of attention for it if it came out, so the decision of even participating in this interview was a strategic one according to Nezu. Hitoshi's status as a yokai however was to be kept a secret, mostly by

the boy's own request. He wasn't quite ready for the entire world to know he was a demon, especially with his history of being bullied for his 'villanous' quirk. And as much as they'd all hated the decision, they understood where he came from and respected it.

“Ah,” Shouto hummed, bobbing his head at the question. “You are confused. I did not use my quirk, I used Ground Zero’s.”

The audience was silent and the host paused, blinking slightly at the unexpected answer. There was a moment where they struggled to gather themselves before leaning forward again. “I’m sorry, I must have misheard you. You used *Ground Zero’s* quirk?”

“Yeah, he did,” Katsuki interrupted sharply, never one to be patient when it came to others. Not to mention he *hated* having to repeat himself. “You fuuu- freakin’ deaf or somethin’?” he asked, just barely keeping himself from cussing on live tv. *Again*.

“I assume the answer to this will simply lead up to your next clip,” Shouto sighed, waving the host on. “Why don’t you play that first so we can explain in more detail.”

The host seemed too confused to argue so they played the next clip. This time Katsuki’s face being the one up on the big screen.

He was absolutely filthy, soot and ash caked in his blonde hair and the orange in his tails practically non-existent underneath all the dirt and debris. He looked annoyed at the many microphones being shoved in his face, but Shouto could see the softness in his expression when Miruko slung her arm over the boy’s shoulders.

“Muriko’s one of the best so of course it’s great working for her. She didn’t know I could shift like that until the internship, so no she didn’t fuckin’ choose me because of that. And it’s not a quirk, it’s just me.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“What I fuckin’ said. Ow! Okay- okay! Jeez, you’re gonna gimme a fuckin’ concussion!”

“Just answer the questions, Zero, and we can bounce!”

“I’m half yokai, half human. The fox shift is just something I can do, okay? It’s not a fuckin’ quirk.”

The clip ends there, even though Shouto knows it went on a few

seconds after that. Instead they've cut in clips of Katsuki shifting between his fox and his human forms, more shakey recordings done from far away as he and Miruko face off against a fire and electricity Nomu. And then it's over.

"So before we get back into this strange topic of sharing quirks, let's get down to the nitty gritty, the real reason you're here today. Ground Zero," the Host said, a tense sort of smile on his face as he turns towards the irate blonde, "tell us. Is it true? Are you actually a yokai spirit?"

And surprisingly, instead of spitting insults or yelling at the man, Katsuki merely scoffs and shrugs. "Yeah, sort of. I'm a hybrid. Mom was a demon, dad was a human. Out popped me, the half-breed."

"Your mother, she's here with you today, correct?"

"Fuck no," Katsuki sneered, cursing again under his breath when Miruko kicked him in warning. "I *mean* she's back in the spirit world doing whatever the fu- whatever it is demon queens do or whatever. I was adopted by her best friend. No, I won't tell you who that is because it's none of your daa—aang business. Shut *up*, Shouto," the blonde hissed, elbowing Shouto in the ribs when the boy was caught giggling at the way he was censoring himself. "The old hag gave me up for my protection or some crap like that so I was raised here."

The host bobbed his head with rapt interest, soaking the information up like a sponge. "And have you visited your home world then?"

Katsuki shrugged, leaving the question unanswered and baring his teeth at Miruko when her foot twitched.

"We all visited a little over a month ago," Shouto told the host with a tiny, barely there smile. "It was lovely, but very dangerous. We don't recommend anyone trying to visit without prior knowledge or a suitable escort. I'm sure the yokai there would like their home to remain theirs."

For a while the interview went on like that. The host asking Katsuki questions about his heritage, only half of which went answered. Eventually the pack was brought up and both boys were given permission to list off the members of their pack via their hero names only, with the exception of Izuku and Hatsume who, for the time being, remained as 'our eighth and ninth pack members'. The host didn't seem bothered enough to question it. Then came the questions about their quirks. Shouto's video was played again as a reminder for

those just tuning in and the host eagerly repeated his question about why they could share quirks.

“It seems to be an ability that came with our pack bond,” Shouto answered with a shrug. “There are many things that come with it that we won’t discuss, but it appears that with our bond we are able to share abilities and quirks as needed. It’s still something very new to us and we’re still learning how to do it.”

“Yeah,” Katsuki snorted, leaning his shoulder heavily into Shouto’s as he slumped further into the couch, a teasing grin on his pretty lips. “That much is obvious by how shi- fu- ugh how *terrible* you are at using my quirk. You know how long it took me to learn how to maneuver in the air with those blasts? And you think you can do it on your first try?”

He scoffed and Shouto couldn’t help but smile at him, raising a cool eyebrow. “I did it, didn’t I? You would have still been fighting that Nomu if I hadn’t told you how to beat it. And to think you never gave me my thank you.”

“Wha- shut the *fuck up you half and half bii--- ow! Stop kicking me!”*

“Stop cussing on *live tv!”* Miruko yelled back, only for Katsuki to growl at her and slump back into his seat.

“Well, it does seem at least that even if it’s new, you all seem to have a very good handle on yours and each other’s quirks.”

Shouto shared an amused smirk with his boyfriend before glancing back at the host. “It comes with its trials and errors. The night that we learned about this new ability, our other partner managed to accidentally brainwash us for almost an entire hour. It was very strange and extremely adorable.”

In the distance they could hear the scandalized screech from Izuku backstage, causing the audience and host to burst into laughter, but before it could be questioned, Katsuki leaned forward. “And then one of our other idiots got his hand fucking stuck in the wall because he was trying to use Red Riot’s quirk without knowing how. And this was *after* the brainwashing debacle so the fu-*dging* idiot had the audacity to text us and tell us he ‘*hypothetically’* had his hand stuck in a wall and didn’t know how to get out.”

It was easier after that, with the laughter and ease that came with talking about the pack. Miruko even got to chime in a few times to

talk about things that had happened during pack night at her Agency, including Celophane trying to use fire tape, Chargebolt trying to catch Alien Queen's acid on fire, and Red Riot attempting to electrocute himself *while* hardened. Some questions were asked about various pack members, clarifying who was who and which heroes they'd interned with. Though anytime the questions grew too personal Katsuki would start growling and Miruko would start kicking and Shouto or Burnin' were left suggesting they just come back for another interview including all nine pack members sometime. (Shouto couldn't help but be amused at that idea however, as the host already looked somewhat overwhelmed by their antics and only two of them were here now.)

At some point it was brought back up that Shouto had said "other partner" when referencing Izuku. And while he'd expected the questions about their love lives to come up, Shouto couldn't help but be a bit disappointed that the host felt the need to ask in the first place. After all, they were only sixteen.

"We're not *all* dating," Katsuki grimaced when the host had asked, his ears (which had popped out somewhere between the seventh and eighth Muriko kick) twitching at the top of his head even if his tails remained hidden. "That's fudgin' nasty. Those extras wish they had me," he scoffed and Shouto gave him a gentle roll of the eyes before turning back towards the host with a smile.

"Some of our pack members are dating each other, but Ground Zero and I are only in a relationship with each other and one other pack member who's hero name has not been chosen yet so we won't say it," Shouto said politely.

"He's here with you today, isn't he?" the host asked, leaning around them with a smile and waving towards where Izuku was standing, his eyes wide in surprise at being noticed. "Why not bring him out to say hello? Come on! Don't be shy, there's plenty of room!"

"Hey, he doesn't have to-"

"I don't think-"

Both boys on stage were cut off when Izuku stumbled a bit shyly into the spotlight and smiled, waving towards the audience. He blushed when a stage hand stopped him to clip a mic to his hero jumpsuit, which he'd decided to wear since they were planning on sparring at Miruko's agency after the interview, his visor pushed up into his green

hair. Shouto could tell he was grateful now for that decision.

After a burst of cheers from the audience and assurance from the host that it was alright, Izuku was sitting between Shouto and Katsuki with a bright red face and a blinding smile. It was cute. Shouto kind of wanted to kiss it, but he didn't.

"Um- hello! It's nice to be here? I think?"

"Goodness aren't you just adorable," the host cooed, the audience following suit when Izuku blushed and Katsuki threw his arm over the back of the couch. He pressed a comforting hand against Izuku's shoulder, urging him to relax a bit. "So tell us, Ground Zero and Shouto say you haven't chosen a hero name yet, any chance you have some in mind?"

Izuku chuckled awkwardly, rubbing at the back of his neck in a nervous tic. "Um- actually I have decided on one. I just hadn't turned it in yet to be official but- uh- well it's Viridian: the Wild Card Hero."

And oh… Shouto hadn't known that the boy had chosen a hero name yet, and judging by the look of surprise on Katsuki's face, he hadn't known either.

"I um… wanted it to be a surprise," Izuku says, a bit unsure. "The Viridian part is obvious. The wild card was my other friend's suggestion. I'm quirkless, so I use a lot of support items and gadgets, weapons even, things like that. Which, you know, could be anything I want it to be! So- hence the wild card part."

"Quirkless? Does that mean you can't share the other's quirks with this new bond of yours?"

Izuku hummed and shook his head. "Nope, just means they can't share mine. I *can* use their quirks if I need to, but I really only have access to a few of them. Since I was born quirkless, my body wasn't built to handle the more destructive quirks. I'd never be able to use Ground Zero or Shouto's quirks for example, but I could use Red Riot's or Violet Haze's. It's also a lot harder for me to use them than it is for the others since they're so used to it already. It takes a lot more energy out of me. Which is fine!" The greenette interrupted himself with another blinding smile. "Because I want to be the first quirkless hero anyway! Us using each other's quirks is mostly for emergencies, and I can barely use them anyway, so I'm still going to rely mostly on my support gear and my regular skills! I've gotten this far without a quirk, and I plan to keep it that way."

Izuku was an instant star in the interview, regardless of his nerves, and it was obvious both Shouto and Katsuki were glad for it. Katsuki hated being questioned and poked and prodded, and Shouto was just so awkward when it came to socializing in general, that neither of them particularly cared for interviews.

The questions only lasted another half an hour, much to their relief. There were the classic questions about their relationship that were easily buffered by either the adults or Katsuki's screaming that it was none of their business. Endeavor was brought up a few times in regards to how he felt about all of this, to which Shouto simply shrugged and said he didn't know, they hadn't spoken about it. (He still wasn't quite ready for the truth to come out, and luckily his partners and mentors respected that decision.) And UA of course was brought up plenty of times, asking whether or not All Might was their teacher, if Katsuki was even allowed to be a student there, what their futures looked like in the hero world, things like that.

Eventually the conversation turned towards the two adults on the stage as well, the host asking both Burnin' and Miruko what it was like to work with the kids, if they'd met the pack and what they were like too. (*"A fucking madhouse, I tell ya. They had pack night at my agency a few days ago and I swear even my own sidekicks aren't that chaotic!" "What the hell, old hag? You get to cuss on tv and I don't?" "Yeah, because I'm a fuckin' adult, you brat!")*

By the end of the interview they were wrung out and mentally exhausted, but it was still a relief when the host announced their final question and the audience simmered down once more.

"And finally, Ground Zero, we have one more question for you. If all of this has been true so far, which I'm inclined to believe it has been," they began, leaning forward on their elbiws with a smile. "Tell us what it is you're doing here in our world. Why come out now and tell the world what you are? What are your goals here?"

Shouto wasn't *particularly* happy with the way that question was phrased, as if Katsuki didn't belong here, and he could tell Izuku didn't like it either judging by the way he pouted slightly, but Katsuki just crossed his arms and scrunched his face up in that way he always did when he was trying to think seriously about an answer before giving it.

"There's a lot about the yokai that you don't know and probably wouldn't understand, mostly because I don't even fuc-fudging

understand it," Katsuki began, lips twisted into a sneer and shoulders tensed. Izuku shifted slightly into him and he glanced at the other two boys briefly before continuing. "Hybrids like me usually die pretty early on, they don't make it to their middle school years, much less till they're old enough to be heroes. Well I'm not gonna let that happen anymore. I'm gonna be the best fuckin' hero out there and I'm going to be there for *everyone*, even the ones left behind. Whether that be by demons or by humans. They all need someone out there looking out for them. And it's gonna be me."

*** SMUT WARNING BELOW ***

"I'm fucking exhausted."

"Ah Kaacan wait don't- I'm still- *oof*."

Katsuki groaned as he fell onto the futon, and consequently onto Izuku as well, his whole body sprawled across the smaller teen like a particularly irate throw blanket. The greenette bellow him grumbled and coughed at the sudden weight, attempting to shove the blonde off before giving up when it was clear he wasn't going anywhere.

Shouto huffed in amusement from somewhere behind them and after a few moments, Katsuki could feel the futon shift as the dual-haired boy crawled over it to sit by Izuku's head. Warm fingers threaded through blonde spikes and Katsuki hummed in content, his head buried somewhere between Izuku's shoulder and neck, the scent of them both surrounding him entirely and all but turning him into goo.

“Kaachan? You okay?”

“Mmm,” the boy grumbled intelligently, rubbing his nose into Izuku’s throat and letting a content purr escape his chest. “Smell good…”

Izuku giggled, arms lifting up to wrap around Katsuki’s shoulders. “We just spent two hours training, Kaachan. I smell like sweat and smoke. We should really shower.”

But Katsuki shook his head, fingers reaching up under the boy’s loose hoodie to dance across his toned stomach, his lips pressing into the soft spot below Izuku’s ear. “Smells good. I like it. Like you.” He sounded a little drunk, even to his own ears, but Katsuki couldn’t help it. Everything had been so stressful lately that it just felt easier to breathe when Shouto and Izuku were nearby. The sports festival, the Ikai, All Might, the press. It was all a lot and they’d barely had time to

just be around each other without the pack or their parents breathing down their necks in worry. (And *yes,* he was reluctantly including Mic and Aizawa in the title of parents.)

“K-Kaachan we shouldn’t, ah!”

Katsuki latched onto the smaller boy’s throat before he could really register what he was doing, his teeth nipping at the skin teasingly and his lips sucking light purple marks into the skin just behind his ear, under his jaw, into his collarbone where it peeked out of the too-big hoodie he wore. (*Katsuki’s hoodie*.) Smaller hips bucked up into him at a particularly sharp nip of teeth and the boy groaned, a hand slapping over his mouth immediately, eyes wide.

“There’s no one else here,” Katsuki promised him, grabbing at Izuku’s wrist and pulling it away as he raised up slightly. He kissed Izuku like his life depended on it, like he was sucking the life out of the boy and feeding off it. It was intoxicating, the scent of sweets and spices mixing beautifully in the air around them. “Want to hear you,” he murmured, his lips brushing Izuku’s with each word.

Big green eyes stared up at him, his throat bobbing when he swallowed and nodded. “O-okay. But what- what about Shou?”

Both teens shifted so they could glanced up at their other partner who’s hands were now strategically placed in his lap. His face was a bright red, tiny little flames licking across his eyebrow before disappearing completely. Katsuki shifted, sitting up just enough to lean into Shouto’s space and press his own kiss against the boy’s cool lips. Shouto responded immediately, his movements still a bit hesitant and unsure, but no less enthused. He tasted like frost on Katsuki’s tongue and the little high pitched whine he gave when Katsuki pulled away was like music to his ears. He couldn’t help but smirk at the other boy, giving him another peck as he crawled closer and sat himself into Shouto’s lap completely. The dual-haired boy’s hands gripped his hips instantly, eyes widened in surprise but Katsuki didn’t give him time to question it before ducking down to latch his mouth onto Shouto’s right shoulder.

He could hear Izuku’s soft ‘*oh*’ behind him at the sight, and a flutter of pride and arousal shot through the Kitsune like fire, only serving to urge him on more. He rocked his hips against Shouto’s as they made out, their breaths coming heavy and Shouto’s hair mussed up from where Katsuki was running his hands through it.

“What do you want, Shouchan?” Katsuki whispered against his boyfriend’s lips, rocking their hips together again and reveling in the moan that was punched out of the taller boy. “Do you want to hear Izuku’s little breathy moans and his little squeaks of surprise when I work him over the edge? Do you want to watch as I pick him apart like the meal he is?” Another roll of his hips and he could feel Shouto’s fingers tightening around his hips, tight enough he was sure he’d have bruises in the morning. (Or he hoped he would at the very least). “Or do you want me to stay in your lap until I’m begging for you to tear me apart? I could do it you know, could have you a moaning mess if I wanted. Just say the word.”

Much to Katsuki’s absolute delight, a puff of steam escaped Shouto’s lips with the next moan and the hands on his hips tightened until Katsuki couldn’t move to rock or shift like he’d been doing. And when he glanced up, Shouto looked unsure, like he knew what he wanted but didn’t know how to ask for it.

“Tell me what you want Shouto,” Katsuki urged, leaning forward to press another kiss to his lips, this one gentle and guiding. “Please?”

It had to have been the ‘please’ to do it because Katsuki *never* said please.

But Shouto grunted again and bit his lip, blinking down at the blonde with a bright blush across his pretty cheeks. “I… would like to watch. If-if that’s okay?”

“Fuck yeah,” the fox grinned, pulling Shouto back into a sharp kiss before he moved off his lap, pushing and shoving him back towards the wall. “Come on, sit here. Legs up, back against the wall,” Katsuki ordered, grinning in excitement as the boy followed the orders easily. “Zuku, sit here,” he said, pushing the greenette between Shouto’s legs, his back pressed against their other partner’s front and his face no less red than Shouto’s hair. They were slightly slumped down, just enough for Shouto to wrap his arms around Izuku’s waist and for Katsuki to kneel between their spread legs. “Zu, you okay with this?”

The greenette blushed deeper, his freckles like darkened stars across his cheeks and Katsuki couldn’t help but lean forward to press kisses across every one he could get to. He waited until the boy nodded, squeaking out a quiet “Y-yes, Kaachan,” before diving back in for more.

Izuku was less hesitant about kissing than Shouto was, though none of

them were particularly skilled at it. They were each other's firsts in pretty much everything- if you didn't count that dumb girl in primary school who'd kissed Katsuki on the playground one day and made Izuku cry.

Still, Izuku was enthusiastic even if he was shy. He let Katsuki take the lead, but didn't back down when tongues and teeth were added into the mix, his breaths mixing with moans and gasps. Oh and what pretty sounds he let out when Katsuki's hands started roaming, fingers tracing the taut muscles of his stomach and brushing over the small pecs his boyfriend sported, releasing his own moan this time when the greenette bucked up into him at the action.

Katsuki could feel the hardness against his stomach and he couldn't help the way his own face heated up at the prospect that *he'd* done that. *Fuck*.

"Hands or mouth?"

Izuku jolted under him in surprise and Katsuki glanced up to see *both* of his partners staring at him in shock. "W-what?!" Izuku squawked, fingers clutching at Katsuki's shoulders as if he could physically stop the boy from moving anymore.

Katsuki snorted, rolling his eyes, before leaning forward to press another kiss to Izuku's lips. "We don't have to do anything if you don't want to, but I really want to get either my hands or my mouth in your pants. So you pick, or-" he grinned, not pulling away as he trailed his eyes across green curls to meet heterochromic orbs. "Or we can let Shouchan pick. He is just watching after all."

"I-I-" Izuku swallowed, his fingers shaking on Katsuki's bare skin, twisting slightly until they were able to grasp onto his tank top in desperation. "I don't know- I… which is better?"

Katsuki shrugged. "Dunno, never tried with anyone else, obviously and I can't use my own mouth on myself, dummy." There was a pause between the three of them before Katsuki hummed. "You're nervous. We don't have to-"

"No!" Katsuki blinked in surprise at the outburst but Izuku shook his head frantically. "I-I mean- I mean I want to! I do- I just… what if I'm- if you don't-"

Ah, so that was the problem.

“None of us know what the fuck we’re doing, bunny,” Katsuki assured him, pressing a gentle kiss to Izuku’s cheek, his throat, his fingers. “I’ve never done this before either, but I’ve watched people do it. Doesn’t look that hard.” He kept going until he was laying on the futon between Izuku’s legs, his kisses trailing down the boy’s stomach where he’d raised the hoodie high enough for Shouto to hold it out of the way. Izuku was back to heavy breathing and grasping fingers, nails digging into Katsuki’s skin but the blonde didn’t care. He didn’t care because Izuku smelt *amazing*. Tasted *amazing*.

It was like the fox was hungry for more and more and more. Like he wanted to bite down and never let go.

Katsuki ignored the urge though, filing it away for later as he nipped at Izuku’s hip bones. The boy arched up into him and he smirked, hands forcing the hips back down with a strength he knew the greenette couldn’t fight back against.

“Gotta stay still bunny, or you’ll choke me. Grab onto Shouto if you need to.”

Going down on Izuku was equal parts absolutely weird and everything he wanted. There was a musk to his taste, like sweat and ozone and something just entirely *Izuku*, that Katsuki found himself chasing after, careful to keep his teeth out of the way. He filed away every noise and hitch of breath, repeating actions that got him that twitch of the hips or the tight fingers in his hair.

Fuck it was great. Katsuki couldn’t help it when he shoved his hand down his own pants, palming himself with each downward thrust.

There were a few times he’d been too enthusiastic, gagging when he went too far or too hard, but he didn’t let it stop him. Not until Izuku was practically sobbing in Shouto’s arms, his muscles locking up and his back arching before emptying right into Katsuki’s mouth, Katsuki following into his sweats soon after.

“Ah- I’m-I’m sorry Kaachan! I didn’t mean to! I just- ah, shit- I didn’t-“

“It’s fine, bunny,” Katsuki snorted, because it was. It wasn’t really a *good* taste necessarily, but it wasn’t bad. A little sharp and salty, the texture kind of weird and thick. But Katsuki couldn’t say it was *bad*. He wiped the back of his mouth with his hand and grinned, sharp teeth on display as he leaned forward to press a soft, hungry kiss to Izuku’s mouth. When he was done, he shifted to the side to let the boy breathe, moving his mouth instead to Shouto’s who met him with a

hungry, fervor. An enthusiasm that Katsuki wasn't used to with his more hesitant partner.

"Mmm, enjoyed the show then?" Katsuki grinned when they separated, enjoying the almost sheepish nod Shouto gave him at the question. "Need us to finish you off?"

"Ah, um…" Shouto swallowed, ducking his head to hid it in Izuku's shoulder, his arms tightening around their smaller partner. "No," he whispered shakily. "I um… I'm done."

"You came from just watching?" Katsuki asked in surprise, his eyes wide and the back of his neck heating up with a blush. Shouto groaned in embarrassment but Katsuki couldn't help his laugh as he tugged a lock of white hair to get the boy's attention. He waited until those mismatched eyes glanced up at him before ducking down to press a kiss to Shouto's lips. "I'm not making fun of you, dork. I think it's hot. Right Zuku?" When both boys were met with silence, Katsuki pulled back, his frown turning into an amused smirk at the sight of the sleeping boy beneath him. "Guess he was really worn out. Man, if it's this easy to get him to sleep this early, I need to blow him more often."

And Katsuki decided once again, as Shouto burst out into giggles, that the other boy's laughter was one of the most beautiful sounds in the world.

Fuck, he really loved his boyfriends.

Chapter End Notes

> We're probably going to have one or two ish chapters of intermission/pack fluff after this before I get into the next arc. Hope that's okay with y'all. I'm super fuckin' stoked for the next arc so I want to kind of build into it a little while doing some fluff and pack bonding. We'll explore a little more into their bond too while we're at it.
> For those of you who skipped the smut, you didn't miss anything important. For those of you who read it, I kind of headcannon Shouto as a bit demi/ace when it comes to sex. He doesn't feel the need to be involved in the actual act most of the time and enjoys just watching. He will definitely participate, his drive just isn't as high as Izuku or Katsuki's. He's also still unused to physical affection and touch so that plays into the fact that he'd rather just kind of watch and get off on his own rather than have the others

act with him, if that makes sense? It makes sense in my head. ANYWAY, hope you liked this chapter! Go get a snack you lovely little baby goblins and drink your water!

Chapter 43: Passionfruit Green Tea

Chapter Summary

A date, some bonding, and Passionfruit Green Tea.

Chapter Notes

This chapter is a little shorter than usual, but it's also another fluff interlude. It 100% was not planned at all but I had this idea and I just absolutely fell in love with it. So here you go! Hope you like it! Next chapter will be getting back into plot with our next arc! Woohoo!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hitoshi was nervous. And confused. And upset. And a million other things, but mostly he was nervous.

It started with plans to visit the aquarium. Plan he was *supposed* to have with Mina, Eijirou, and Denki. The rest of the pack had their own shit to do this weekend and Mina had said something about a new exhibit opening up at the aquarium that she wanted to see so Eijirou of course was eager to take her. And since Hitoshi had nothing better to do, he'd agreed when the other two invited him and Denki.

Granted, part of that agreement was because he'd do literally anything to hang out with Denki more outside of school or pack activities, but they didn't need to know that.

The problem came, however, when he was standing awkwardly in front of the aquarium on his own and the other three were nowhere to be found, the only hint that they even had plans being a text on his phone he'd received five minutes ago.

PinkBitch 12:16 pm : *Something came up, sorry! Have fun ;P*

How was he supposed to have fun when he was literally by himself?

Part of Hitoshi- the part that grew up bullied and beaten and broken- worried that this was a set up. That the others were pranking him, making fun of him. Poor Hitoshi with no friends, so desperate to show up even when the others didn't.

He briefly wondered how pathetic it'd be to call his dads to come pick

him back up…

“Toshiiiii!”

Jolting slightly, Hitoshi’s head shot up to follow the voice, blinking in surprise at the bright blob of energy rushing towards him. He wasn’t sure if he was frozen there because Denki had surprised him in actually showing up when the others ditched, or if it was because the other boy looked…

Holy shit…

He looked amazing.

It was rare any of them got the chance to actually go out and have fun. Most of their time was spent in school, training, or relaxing, which meant a huge pile of nothing but uniforms, hero costumes, or sweatpants and oversized t-shirts. So seeing Denki dressed up outside of pack/school activities felt like Christmas came early and he couldn’t help but stare.

Why, you may ask?

Because Denki was wearing a skirt.

A *skirt*.

Well technically it was a pair of techwear shorts with a three quarter skirt wrapped around them, pleated and decorated with a few straps and buckles, just short enough to show off the boy’s smooth, pale legs and fishnet stockings. The yellow midriff t-shirt Denki wore was bright and obnoxious as always, rising up slightly to show of the muscled expanse of his stomach as he waved, and Hitoshi just barely made out the tiny Pikachu on the breast of the shirt. The whole look was tied off with the accessories: the chunky black demonias, the heavy amount of bracelets around his wrists, and earrings dangling from his ears.

And the choker.

That damn choker around his throat that Hitoshi wanted to reach out and grab onto. That Hitoshi wanted to slip his fingers into the metal ring dangling from and pull him into a kiss.

Fuck.

“Toshi? Hey, are you okay?”

Something strangled and resembling the sound of a dying cat escaped the satori's throat and he raised a hand to cover his face, forcing himself to remember how to breathe properly.

Did Denki even know what he did to him?

"Is- does it look okay? It's been a while since I've gotten to dress up to hang out-"

"No," Hitoshi interrupted quickly, wincing slightly at the brief hurt that flashed across the blonde's face and he shook his head. "No, I mean- you look great. Like," he let out a heavy breath and glanced up at the sky for a moment, "*really* great."

When he looked down again, the shorter boy was blushing, a dopey sort of grin on his lips at the compliment. "You uh- you look hot too- I mean *great!* You look great too! I don't think I've ever actually seen you in real people clothes."

Hitoshi raised an eyebrow, glancing down at himself with a frown.

He didn't really try to dress up, not as much as Denki apparently had, but having known the other boy was coming, he'd at least decided against his usual wardrobe of obnoxious cat sweaters and joggers. Instead he'd gone for some black ripped jeans and a stylistically baggy purple t-shirt. He'd tossed on his denim jacket (which was covered in way too many patches and pins), his usual Doc Martins, and his many rings and earrings before deciding it was as good as it was going to get.

He personally didn't think it was nearly as attractive as Denki's outfit, but go off I guess.

"Where are the others?" Denki asked, peeking around the taller boy as if Eijirou and Mina were hiding behind his lanky frame somehow.

"Ditched us," he replied with an eye roll and a shrug, trying not to pout.

Don't get him wrong, he was ecstatic at the fact that he was alone with Denki at the aquarium. That this was *basically* a date. He just wished the other two had let him in on the plan. If there even was a plan. Maybe something *did* come up.

He doubted it.

Denki did pout however, his eyebrows scrunching up slightly in an emotion Hitoshi wasn't quite sure how to read. It made him nervous.

"Is that okay? We can come back some other time with them if you want," the purple-haired boy suggested, his stomach twisting at the fact that Denki didn't want to spend time with him.

"No! No- I just," Denki paused to bite his lip, glancing almost nervously back towards the large building that held the aquarium. "I was just hoping Eiji would be here in case something went wrong. I've um- I've never been to an aquarium before. Always thought it'd be too dangerous, you know? My quirk is harder to control when I'm excited and water and electricity don't exactly mix. I was always afraid I'd hurt the fishies. "

Oh, that made sense.

"We can hold hands," Hitoshi suggested, dutifully ignoring the loud voice screaming at him in the back of his head asking him *what the literal fuck?!* Big golden eyes met his and he fought back his own blush, trying to keep his patented deadpan expression on his face as best he could. "We uh… we know with the bond that we can send electricity through it. We could use it as kind of a grounding rod. If you get too excited or something, the electricity will just go into me, then back into you and back again. Like a circuit."

Sure Toshi, like a circuit. It's definitely not a dumb excuse to hold a pretty boy's hand.

It definitely was, but Denki didn't need to know that. He probably didn't even want to hold Hitoshi's hand anyway. It was a dumb idea. They could always go somewhere else-

"Okay!"

And just like that, there was a small hand fitting into his, fingers threading between fingers and static sparking off his skin like a live wire. It was intoxicating.

Denki didn't hesitate after that to drag the brainwasher towards the line of the building where Hitoshi insisted on paying for their tickets. (Something Denki only agreed to on the demand that he got to buy them lunch when they got hungry later.)

"Have you ever been to an aquarium?"

Hitoshi hummed, bobbing his head as they took a few steps forward in the line. “My gran brought me once when I was really little. I don’t remember a lot of it, but I remember liking it. The stingrays were always my favorite because they let you pet them.”

“Your gran was a priestess right? Like Auntie Hinko?”

“Yeah, she took me in after my mom died,” Hitoshi said with a shrug, smiling in thanks when he felt a little squeeze of his hand. “My old man was some random yokai who just popped by to have some fun before leaving I guess. Gran said she tried to find him once when I was born but didn’t have any luck. It’s okay though, I don’t really mind. She was the best thing I ever had before the pack and I don’t think I’d ever change that.”

Which was true. He was still eternally grateful that Aizawa and Yamada had let him set up a shrine to his gran in the corner of their living room. He hadn’t gotten to have one since he entered the foster system, only kept a few photos of her and some of her jewelry in a little box shoved in the bottom of his go-bag. Now though he had a whole spot for her, sitting right next to another shrine for one of his dad’s best friends they’d lost when they were younger.

He liked to think their spirits got along well, and Hitoshi liked to say a prayer to the stranger while he was with his gran just to remind him that there were people thinking of him.

Denki bounced a step closer, knocking Hitoshi out of his memories just in time to tune into the boy’s words.

“My dad ditched when I was little too. Mom always said they broke up because they grew apart, but I think he just couldn’t put up with being a stay at home dad, you know? My older sister and I were a lot to handle and with my mom being a pro hero, she wasn’t home a lot. Dad had to take us on all by himself and I think he just got tired of it.”

“That sucks.”

But the blonde just shrugged and swung their arms slightly with the movement. “Eh, I guess. I think Kana was more broken up about it that I ever was, but he was around for a lot longer for her than for me. And he still sends cards and presents for our birthdays and stuff. He even came for Kana’s graduation when she got out of high school.”

“I didn’t know your mom was a pro hero,” Hitoshi said, pulling the boy up to the ticket counter and quietly ordering two tickets for them

both.

Denki grinned excitedly as he took their lanyards and took it upon himself to loop Hitoshi's over his head before his own. "Yup," he answered with another bounce. "Kana pretty much had to raise me, but it's still exciting you know? Having a pro for a mom? She's number 63 in the charts and still moving up! So keep an eye out for Litch, the Lightning Hero. Short for Litchenberg, you know? The scars you get from lightning strikes? She's the reason I want to be a hero too!"

The conversation continued pretty easily after that as they wandered around the various rooms and exhibits, neither one daring to let go of the other's hand. Denki was a chatterbox, barely leaving himself time to breathe between topics and always bouncing between stories and displays and random facts about fish. But Hitoshi didn't mind, perfectly content to soak in every word and revel in the other boy's constant attention.

He gave small smiles for the hundreds of selfies that Denki insisted on taking, stopped and listened when the boy read off the info signs at *every* display, and managed to sneak his own pictures when he caught the boy pressing his face against the glass of the shark exhibit to get a closer look.

Throughout the day he found himself eternally grateful that they had all managed to learn how to block off their bonds or else he was afraid of just how much love and affection the other boy would be feeling through Hitoshi's end. Not to mention the teasing he'd be getting from the others if they could sense the pure awe he had anytime he looked at those bright golden eyes or felt the spark of electricity between their joined fingertips.

What was it Mina called him once? A simp?

Yeah, that sounded about right.

"Look Toshi! The stingrays!"

Before the satori could process what was happening, Denki was dragging him forward towards another room and into a short line that led to the stingray enclosure. It wasn't as busy as Hitoshi remembered it being, but there were still quite a few people wandering around with their hands dunked in the water.

When they reached the front of the line Denki was given a glove used

for those with quirks that were dangerous to the animals, which he quickly slipped on without argument. (Hitoshi couldn't help but wonder how often people like Denki or Katsuki needed extra protection when at public attractions like this.)

"Wow! They're a lot smaller than I expected! Finding Nemo made them seem so big!"

He turned slightly, watching as the blonde leaned over the glass wall to watch the stingrays in the water. His amber eyes glittered in awe, his pretty lips parted just slightly, and Hitoshi couldn't help himself as he pulled his phone out to sneak another picture. Denki glanced at him in curiosity before blessing him with a blinding smile and posing for the next photo, classic finger gun aimed at the camera and eyes squinted in excitement.

They spent a while at the stingrays.

Hitoshi hadn't been lying when he said they were his favorite, and he couldn't fight back his smile whenever one brushed under his fingertips or scratched against his palm. Lucky for them, even with Denki's visible excitement, he kept a reign on his lightning enough that it didn't cycle through Hitoshi and into the tank.

"What do they feel like?"

"Hm?"

The yokai hummed, glancing up from where his fingers were dancing across the back of one of the rays. Denki was watching him with a small, almost sad kind of smile, his eyes focused on the water almost wantingly.

And Hitoshi realized that even with the glove, Denki was probably only feeling the pressure of the rays beneath his fingers. He couldn't feel how they moved or how the water felt around them. He could only guess.

"Close your eyes."

The blonde frowned, glancing up at him and scrunching his eyebrow in confusion, but Hitoshi shook his head before he could question him.

"Just trust me, close your eyes and reach out your hand."

He waited until the blonde did as he was told, reaching his gloved

hand back into the tank where Hitoshi led it to the ray he was petting. He slipped his own hand underneath Denki's and focused on the bond between them, focused on pushing what he was feeling into the other boy as his own eyes slipped shut.

The ray under them moved, water rushing around his fingers with each movement, smooth skin and powerful muscles shifting up into his palm. Almost as if it knew what Hitoshi was doing and wanted to help.

He heard Denki gasp and when he glanced up, he could see the boy's eyes open and staring in wonder.

"I can feel it," he breathed, eyes glistening and lips tipping up into the beginnings of a grin. "I can- I can feel it! Holy shit, Toshi! That's-" a giggle broke through his words and he bounced on his feet, the bracelets on his wrists tinkling with the movement. "That's amazing!"

You're amazing, he wanted to say.

You have no idea how amazing you are, he wanted to whisper.

They left the exhibit with smiles and sparks of excitement flickering over their skin, making their way towards the food court as Hitoshi listened to Denki ramble on about how *cool* it was they could feel what the others felt physically and what it could mean for other areas of their lives.

And if he sent a few of the pictures Mina's way when Denki was distracted with his Passionfruit Green Tea from Starbucks, then no one else had to know.

They spent the next few hours just wandering around the large building, admiring the different types of fish and sea creatures, pausing to listen to the various lectures and informational videos that were being put on in different auditoriums or rooms. (Hitoshi found out that Denki *loved* learning new things about random stuff, and got absolutely sucked in to any interactive display they happened across.)

The day was almost done by the time they passed one of the last rooms in the aquarium and Hitoshi paused. Memories of awe and grandeur when his gran had brought him all those years ago flooded through his mind and he just barely managed to grab Denki before the boy turned around to see why he'd stopped.

"Close your eyes."

“Again?”

“Do you trust me?”

Gold met purple and Denki’s cheeks flushed a light pink as he nodded. “Of course.”

“Close your eyes and don’t let go of my hand.”

The jellyfish exhibit was dark inside, letting the glow of the creatures themselves light up the room in a soft light, just as Hitoshi remembered it. The room itself was rather large and circular, with the entirety of the walls being made of glass other than the small strip where the door was. It admittedly wasn’t as picturesque as Hitoshi wanted it to be- there were others in the room and there was a low hum of conversation that layered over the music playing from the speakers- but he led the blonde to the center of the room anyway and turned to face him.

Fuck you’re gorgeous, he wanted to press against the boy’s lips.

Denki looked amazing in the low light, with his eyelashes fluttering over his pink cheeks and his lips parted slightly as he breathed. The light of the jellyfish glistened across the silver of his jewelry and the reflection of the water left an ethereal sort of glow over his soft skin. Like a siren drawing him in to his doom.

And oh how willingly he’d drown for this boy.

“Open your eyes.”

If Hitoshi had thought the look in Denki’s eyes at the stingray exhibit was beautiful, then this look was absolutely devastating. Denki was the one who gasped in surprise, but Hitoshi felt like his breath was stolen away by the pure astonishment and adoration on the blonde’s face as he glanced around them.

There was a time, when Hitoshi was little, where his grandmother took him to a cat sanctuary and they let him play with the baby tigers. It was like he was in heaven, watching the little yellow and orange cubs stumble over themselves and crash into him with their clumsiness. The satori wasn’t sure he’d ever cried or laughed that hard in his life.

He’d never been happier.

Looking at Denki felt kind of like that.

The excitement. The admiration. The *happiness*.

“Toshi?”

The taller boy blinked back into focus, eyes raising from Denki’s lips to his eyes. The blonde was blushing, and it wasn’t until he squeezed Hitoshi’s hands that the yokai realized he was holding both of them now.

“Toshi, was- was this,” Denki paused to lick his lips, glancing down at where their boots were only centimeters apart on the ugly aquarium carpet. “Was this a date?”

Was it?

That hadn’t been his original intention. He honestly had only come because he wanted to spend time with Denki and it seemed like a good excuse. It never occurred to him that this could have been a double date, or that it’d turned into a date the moment Mina told him they weren’t coming.

Did he want it to be?

Absolutely.

“It could be,” Hitoshi whispered, his voice barely heard above the gentle hum of conversation around them. He knew people were probably staring, probably watching the two teenagers standing just a little too close in the center of the room, lit up only by the glow of the jellyfish, but he couldn’t find it in himself to care. Instead, he raised one hand and lifted Denki’s chin until their eyes met, his own gaze hopeful and searching. “Mina and Eijirou *did* ditch us, but- but I’d like it to be. A date, I mean, if you want.”

What a way with words, the voice in his head said, sounding suspiciously like Mina.

“Does that mean I can kiss you?”

Now, Hitoshi has always been a coffee drinker. He’ll compromise with tea if he has no other choice, and only drinks water when training because it’s disgusting and flavorless, but coffee has always been where his heart lies.

But suffice it to say that from that day on, he could easily say Passionfruit Green Tea was his favorite flavor.

“What do you think they’re doing?”

“Making out in the Jellyfish exhibit.”

“They are not! Mina, that’s a public place!”

“And Denki is not only a whore- which I say with the utmost love and respect- but also an exhibitionist at heart. I’ll bet you a thousand yen that they’re making out in the jellyfish room right now.”

“Why the jellyfish?”

“Because they glow and the eels aren’t as pretty. Plus it’s romantic.”

“It’s an aquarium, Mins.”

“And it’s *romantic*! Now come on, you promised to take me to see the pandas and I’m not leaving this zoo without seeing them.”

Chapter End Notes

I'm a ShinKami simp so this chapter was a lot of fun. I've been waiting to get these boys together for so long and I can't believe we're finally here. Hope you guys liked it!
Get a snack and drink some water! Don't be like Hitoshi!

Denki's skirt
https://lycheethelabel.com/products/mochi-button-strap-skort

Chapter 44: Grasping Hands

Chapter Summary

With Final exams over, the pack goes shopping.

Chapter Notes

Hi everyone! So just some updates on my life. New chapters might still be slow and erratic. I just got into my masters program at school and will be starting classes again soon! Woohoo! But that also means I'll be super busy writing for my thesis and classes, so my fics will most likely take the back burner. I'll try and get them updated as often as I can, especially since this one is mostly planned already, but please be patient with me!
On another note that is completely random, I know a lot of people have been asking for my pronouns and I really appreciate that! As of a few days ago, I came out as Nonbinary, so please refer to me with they/them pronouns!
Okay, that's all the news for now! Love you guys!

Mild spoilers this chapter for Shigaraki backstory. (Please be aware that in the near-ish future you'll be getting FULL spoilers for his backstory, so like, if you aren't caught up on the manga, then Idk what to tell you.)

Trigger warnings:
Choking
trauma
implied conditioning (but not like, a lot yet)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“No, listen! I think you guys did great!”

Katsuki snorted, rolling his eyes from his position on the couch, his head in Shouto’s lap and his legs draped lazily over Izuku’s. Mei was perched on top of the couch back, her legs bracketing her green-haired best friendas she worked on braiding his hair, and Mina was in the same position behind shouto, working his much longer hair into two dual coloured braids. The other boys were all sprawled across the floor in front of them, controllers in hand and Mario Cart blasting loudly on the tv as usual when they all gathered at the den for pack night.

“You say that,” Hanta groaned as he was shoved off the rainbow road, “and yet I still got a ten page assessment on what I did wrong in my fight against Midnight!”

“Bro, Mina and I got a *twenty page* assessment! Count yourselves lucky!”

It was nice, Katsuki decided early on, being with the pack so much. He’d never really been a people person growing up, never felt the need for it really. Sure he had his little group of extras that followed him around in middle school, but really Izuku was the only person who had ever mattered to him. Who was ever actually *there* to need. Now though, now there were others.

There was Shouto with his calming presence, sturdy and warm, at his and Izuku’s side. The way he just seamlessly fit into his and Izuku’s dynamic like he was always meant to be there. (Katsuki didn’t believe in soulmates, but if he did, he was sure Shouto was theirs.) Sometimes, when they were all lying in bed together, Katsuki was sure their hearts were beating as one. It was disgustingly cheesy, but the kitsune couldn’t help the happy purr that rolled through him when he’d noticed the first time it’d happened.

Then there was Hitoshi, who was rivaling Eijirou as his best friend. The satori, the only other yokai in their pack, was someone Katsuki had never expected, and yet couldn’t imagine himself without now. They hadn’t started out close, nor did they hang out as often as he did with the rest of the squad in the early days, but at some point Hitoshi had gone from them just talking with the group and them texting constantly back and forth. Hitoshi was… he was protective, in a way that rivaled Katsuki’s own protective instincts. Even though Kat was the one who was the pack mom- or at least that’s what they all called him- Toshi was like the vicious aunt who showed up to rip someone a new one if he heard anyone was in trouble or hurting.

Eijirou was a force of nature in Katsuki’s life that he hadn’t ever really known he needed until he had him. Katsuki was no stranger to extroverts, not with Izuku being there his entire life. The greenette might be a shy, stuttering mess, but he loved making new friends when he could (as seen from the moment he got into UA.) Eijirou was much the same, just without the shy aspect. He had all but brute forced his way into Katsuki’s friend circle, letting the blonde’s brash and rough attitude wash over him like water over smooth stones. And as much as the others joked around about it, Eijirou really was the only one able to temper Katsuki’s attitude if Shouto and Izuku weren’t

able to.

Hanta and Denki were their own breed of pack members, taking up the position of brothers Katsuki never knew really had a need for, but was so glad he had now. They contrasted each other nicely, with Denki's loud and excitable energy and Hanta's chill and laid back presence. And while they weren't anchors like Hitoshi or Eijirou were, and they weren't lovers like Shouto and Izuku, Katsuki still found an unending need to have them close. Because the thing with Denki and Hanta were that they were undyingly loyal. Sure, the whole pack was loyal to a fault, but those two would do anything for the rest of the pack, not just Katsuki. They were the ones awake at 3 am because Eijirou was self-conscious about his blackened roots. They were the ones dropping everything to race across the city to play distraction for Mina and Mei if they were harassed on the streets and needed a getaway. And sure, the others would do the same thing if needed, but the fact of the matter was that it *wasn't* needed because that job so often fell on the blonde and black haired members of their family.

And then there was Mina, who was there when Katsuki (or the others) needed someone different to go to. Her role in the pack was harder to explain, more like the older sister who made it her job to always know what was happening so she could be prepared to help at any notice. She was the one to show up on Katsuki's doorstep with a face mask and snacks because she knew when Katsuki's bad days were and she knew when he couldn't tolerate how loud or quiet the others would be, knew that the others would pry where she wouldn't.

Mei was the odd ball out in the pack, but by no means any less important. While her personality at first had been a roller-coaster to get used to, at some point she became less of the annoying 5 year old sister and more of the younger brat sister he couldn't help but be fond of. It was no secret that she was in the pack because of Izuku, their best friend status rivaled only by Izuku and his own, but Katsuki couldn't help but be enormously protective of the girl where he wasn't with the others. There was no doubt she could protect herself, he knew that, but her struggle with general conversation and her hyperfixations left a lot of room for her forgetfulness. The amount of times he'd had to *remind her to eat and sleep* on a regular basis was on par with his nagging of Izuku with his analysis.

Still, he didn't think he'd change a single one of them, didn't think he could even imagine any sort of scenario in the future where they weren't right there beside him.

“Kaachan only got a four page paper.”

“*Kaachan only got a four page paper,”* Denki mocked with a pout. “That was so not fair! He’s like, literally your spiritual husband. Of course you’d go easy on him!”

With a warning growl, Katsuki knocked his foot forward into the back of Denki’s head, ignoring the boy’s screech of offence as he fell behind Hitoshi’s character. “Oi, I’ve been getting the nerd’s analysis since my quirk came in. You got twenty pages of analysis? I got *twelve years.”*

There was a few moments of silence before Denki’s shoulders slumped and he bobbed his head. “Yeah, okay, that’s fair. But like, you also went up against All Might. So like, I’m surprised you won in the first place! How’d you even get him to back down? He gave up like, hella quick, bro!”

“Oh yeah, I was curious too,” Eijirou hummed, glancing back at the blonde as the game ended. “I didn’t expect you to win considering the fact that you were up against him by yourself. And he just gave in!”

Katsuki smirked, shrugging as Shouto’s hand drug through his hair, his dull nails scratching soothingly just behind his black and orange ears. “I just used the tools I was given.”

“What does that even *mean?*” Hanta questioned, tipping his head back into Izuku’s lap with a frown.

“Sensei is always telling us to win no matter what,” Katsuki shrugged. “Think outside of the box. That includes some underhanded methods. I just told All Might that I happen to have dirt on him that he may or may not want getting out to the public and he crumpled like a baby.”

Izuku tensed below him, the fingers that had been tracing designs across his skin freezing. Viridian eyes met scarlet, mild fear clashing with smug pride.

And as much as Izuku hated the fact that he and Shouto now knew about the whole thing with All Might- his new weakness and One for All included- the Kitsune couldn’t find it in himself to feel bad about using it against the man. Call it petty payback, call it using your resources, but Katsuki knew it’d get him the win and he wasn’t afraid to use it against the man.

“Kaachan, you didn’t.”

“I’m not ashamed. It got me an A on the final and I got to stick it to the bastard, don’t ask me what it was though,” he aimed at the rest of the pack with a warning in his glare. “I won’t tell you.”

He could tell the others wanted to know, and maybe they would one day when it wasn’t a national secret, but they knew enough to get the hint and didn’t dig any further, much to Izuku’s relief.

Tying off a final knot in Shouto’s braids, Mina moaned and leaned her cheek on the multi-coloured strands. “I’m just upset that we’re going to miss out on camp activities for remedial classes! It’s so unfair! How did they expect us to win against Nezu? *Nezu?!* I literally would have had a better chance up against All Might or Endeavor than fucking Nezu. He shouldn’t have even been allowed to compete.”

“I bet Zuku could beat him,” Hitoshi smirked, barely dodging the scandalized smack that the greenette sent his direction.

“*I could not!*”

Katsuki snorted and poked his smaller boyfriend in the cheek with his toe. “Come on, nerd. You totally could. You beat him in chess all the time.”

“Yeah, and then he beats me ten more times before I even get close again,” Izuku argued, pouting slightly. “I mean, given enough time to plan, maybe? And the environment would definitely come into play. Not to mention the fact that the test is obviously skewed because Nezu would have had plenty of time to plan ahead for any contingency I’d go with. He’d have at *least* twenty back up plans for anything I try to come up with.” The greenette paused, tapping a finger to his chin as his fingers started moving across Katsuki’s legs again, almost as if he was writing something down. “Then again, really all you’d have to do is either exactly what he’d expect, which would be a big gamble, or something he could never see coming. If it was me going up against him, he’d expect me to come up with something other than the obvious. So I could logically go straight for the obvious answer of barreling right through to him and hope for the best. He’s small and not a fighter, if I could get in close combat with him, I’d win no problem. On the other hand, he could expect that, so I would probably be better mixing up my strategy.”

The others were watching him with rapt attention at this point, and Katsuki couldn’t help the proud smirk that spread across his lips as the boy mumbled.

“I rely on my analysis, that’s what I’m good at. I know how to fight and strategize on the spot, but it isn’t my strong suit. Nezu would know that, so he wouldn’t expect me to try for that strategy. I’d probably mix it up, use everyone else’s strategies as my own to get around how well he knows me and how I think. He’d expect me to sneak around and plan, so I’d run straight in instead. He’d expect me to try and counteract his traps, so I’d just avoid them or go through them. That would hopefully get me close enough to get a fighting chance.”

It wasn’t until he delved into mumbled too quiet for any of them to hear that Katsuki poked his cheek again, cocky grin splitting his face when green eyes snapped up at him. “You’re hot when you’re smart, bunny.”

Izuku raised an eyebrow at the compliment, but it was Mei who pouted. “He’s always smart.”

“Exactly.”

Izuku was a teenager, but even so, he had to admit that the mall was one of his least favorite places. Kaachan always called him an extrovert, but being in big crowds surrounded by hundreds of people he didn’t know, with quirks he didn’t know, made him anxious beyond belief. Still, they rarely spent time with the rest of the class outside of the pack, so he’d eagerly agreed to join the class trip for camping supplies anyway. Plus the pack was going, and Kaachan had agreed to stay with him so he didn’t really have anything to worry about.

The others had all split off for one thing or another when they arrived- Mina and Mei parting immediately with most of the girls towards the clothing stores (even if Mei wasn’t going to camp with them), Hanta and Denki joined a few others to hunt down hammocks and sleeping gear, Eijirou joined a few of the guys towards the sports stores, and Shouto and Toshi disappeared to… well, he didn’t actually know. They just went off together.

Leaving Izuku to trail after Kaachan with a list of things they needed to buy for the summer trip.

“I don’t know why everyone’s freaking the fuck out,” Kaachan grumbled, tugging Izuku by the hand he was holding. “They’re acting like it’s a fucking vacation but it’s going to be all training. Zawa doesn’t know what the fuck a vacation even is.”

“It’ll still be fun,” Izuku hummed, skipping up to the blonde’s side with a smile before squeezing his fingers. “We haven’t been camping in forever! And Shou’s never been. Besides, we might be training but Zawa knows not to overwork us too much. It makes us too *inefficient*,” the greenette said, his face going carefully blank as he tried to mimic their teacher. It drew a snort from the yokai beside him and he smiled. “I’m sure we’ll have *some* downtime at least. And I’ll bet you’ll get the chance to run around in your full shift! I think the forest will be nice for you, it’s been too long since you’ve gotten the chance to frolic.”

“I don’t fucking *frolic*,” Katsuki growled, though he didn’t pull away.

Izuku didn’t reply, but he didn’t need to because Kaachan knew he was right. The last time they’d gone camping it had taken an extra day and a half for mom to convince him to leave the woods and it was only because she threatened to take Izuku with her that the blonde came running out.

The memory made him giggle, drawing the blonde’s eyes down to him, narrowed in warning as they paused in the center of the mall. The crowd was decently thick around them when Katsuki pulled up to a stop and turned into the greenette, practically towering over him and ducking just enough that their lips brushed together as he spoke.

“The fuck you giggling at, bunny?”

The sudden proximity sent a rush of excitement and embarrassment through the young analyst, but he refused to back down- dutifully ignoring how bright red he knew his face was.

“Nothing, Kaachan,” he said with a shaky voice. “I just think you’re cute when- when you frolic.”

“I’ll show you cute,” the blonde said, his voice a low gravel that echoed through Izuku’s chest. Before the greenette could respond however, there were lips on his.

They weren’t gentle, Katsuki’s kisses never were, but they were sweet and hungry. Like he never wanted to let go and it made Izuku’s knees weak and his stomach flutter. There was also always a lot of teeth and the shorter boy knew the moment they pulled away from each other his lips would be kiss bruised and bitten, knew that when he ran his tongue over them he’d feel the little indents of Kaachan’s sharp fangs.

“K-Kaachan,” he stuttered, pulling away just slightly, though the blonde’s hands on his cheeks wouldn’t let him go far. “W-we’re in the

middle of the mall."

"Good," he got in reply, a smirk playing on the handsome face in front of him. "Let everyone know you're mine. Too many people are looking at you."

Which… what?

Izuku tried to look around, but Katsuki's hold on him didn't allow for much movement. He knew he was blushing however as he glanced down at himself. He hadn't worn anything special for their trip, just a pair of black jeans, one of Shouto's red sweaters, and his token red sneakers. Sure, Mina had insisted on putting some product in his hair to make his curls stand out and he hadn't managed to get away from her before she dusted some sparkles over his cheeks and eyelids. It was certainly nothing compared to Shouto's braids and turtleneck, or Katsuki's loose tank top that showed off literally every muscle in his arms.

"Stop that."

The greenette blinked, frowning as he glanced up at his boyfriend. "Hm?"

"That thing you do when you think you're not as hot as you think you are," Katsuki elaborated with an angry pout. "You're fuckin' gorgeous, bunny. You have no idea how many people I had to fight off in middle school to keep away from you."

"W-we weren't even together then, Kaachan!"

The blonde shrugged, not looking even the least bit sorry. "None of them were good enough for you."

Izuku hummed, leaning up on his toes to drop another kiss on Kaachan's lips. "And you are?"

"No," the boy replied, surprising the greenette into pulling back slightly. There was an oddly serious look on the boy's face as he traced a finger over Izuku's sparkling cheek, his eyebrows furrowed in contemplation. "I don't think I'll ever be good enough for you, Zuku. But I'll try. Every goddamn day until I get there."

Izuku's heart thumped loudly in his chest, tears prickling slightly in his eyes though they didn't spill.

“Kachaan.” The name came out in barely a whisper, but the gentle kiss he got in return told him that Katsuki heard it. He let his eyes drift shut for just a moment, letting the warm settle around them as if they were the only ones there. As if the crowd around them was invisible.

Instead he focused on the lips pressed gently, yet hungrily, against his own. Focused on the tongue dipping into his mouth, the hands on his cheeks and the body pressed against his own. He focused on the warm body pressed to his front, the fingers wrapping loosely around his throat, the taste of-

Fingers around his throat?

Izuku tensed the same moment Katsuki did, neither one moving when another face drew close and a chin rested on Izuku’s opposite shoulder.

“Ah, ah, ah. Let’s not make any big movements, shall we?”

And though Izuku couldn’t see his face, he’d recognize the voice anywhere. He still heard it in his nightmares, standing over All Might with that sadistic grin, red eyes piercing between pale fingers.

“Shigaraki.”

“So you remember me, good,” the man grinned, staring at Katsuki from over Izuku’s shoulder, four fingers wrapped around the shorter boy’s throat, just tight enough to be a threat. “I’m just here to talk a bit, a friendly conversation, but any sudden movements and I won’t hesitate to kill your little boy toy here. Understood?”

Katsuki didn’t step back, his muscles coiled against Izuku’s, his teeth bared in warning.

The fingers tightened again and Izuku coulddn’t help the small squeak that escaped him. “*Understood?”*

“Yeah, I fuckin’ got it,” Katsuki growled between his teeth.

Izuku took in a shuddering breath when the fingers loosened just a smidge, trying not to let his panic completely flood the pack bond and worry the others. Still, he knew they could feel something when they began tugging on his end of the bond. Questioning, curious, worried.

‘Do not come find us,’ Katsuki’s voice slid through the bond like a knife.

‘*Call Aizawa and have security start evacuating the mall.’*

‘What the fuck is going on?’ Hitoshi demanded, his presence already growing closer to them.

Shouto was drawing closer as well, Izuku could tell, and the thought of any of them seeing this made his stomach drop in fear.

‘*Stop!’* Izuku pushed, his breath hitching as Shigaraki started leading them backwards towards the fountain. ‘*Seriously, Toshi, Shouto. Do what he said. There are too many other people here in danger. We’ll explain later but you have to listen. Please. Get the class out of here and evacuate the mall as calmly as you can.’*

They didn’t get a reply, but they couldn’t feel any of the others coming closer either, so Izuku counted it as a temporary win for now. Instead trying to focus more on the body pressed up against his back.

They’d taken a few steps backwards, Katsuki following immediately, too afraid of getting any further than an arm’s length away. Their hands were joined, but Izuku knew it wouldn’t do any good with Shigaraki only a finger away from killing him.

“What the *fuck* do you want, crusty?”

“*Watch it*,” the villain warned, hot breath dusting across Izuku’s throat and sending goosebumps down his spine. “I told you I just want to talk. I want to know what’s different. Why are *you* special? Why are *you* the one that makes my fucking skin itch?”

Katsuki tensed, something in his eyes widening slightly as he made eye contact with Izuku. There was something there that the greenette recognized but couldn’t place. Something he’d only seen a few times before. A glaze over his eyes and a small shimmer of gold that he only got when-

Oh.

“Sensei wants me to take you,” Shigaraki was still speaking, waving his other hand in the air like there was a particularly irate fly around him. “He makes my Nomu, you know, so things with multiple quirks intrigue him. He says you’re a side quest that needs doing so I can get stronger for my main. But he’s *wrong*.”

The last bit was almost whispered. It was angry and confused, but it was said so quietly- like he was afraid this ‘sensei’ was listening in on

them.

“What the fuck are you-“

“Kaachan,” Izuku warned, glaring at the blonde and squeezing his hand in warning. “Are you- are you going to take him?”

There was a brief moment between the three of them where Shigaraki seemed to be thinking, his fingers tightening and loosening and tightening and loosening. Izuku was glad the conversation seemed to be distracting the villain, as he could see the various security officers sending them looks from around the open court, could see them quietly ushering people away and out of danger.

“He feels different,” Shigaraki finally hissed, his nails digging into Izuku’s throat slightly. Not quite painful yet, but with the potential to be so. “Like an itch inside that I can’t reach. He doesn’t feel like an NPC anymore.”

“*He* is right here,” Katsuki hissed, tails whipping angrily behind him from where they appeared. Izuku couldn’t see him, but he figured the man’s attention was on them with the way his head snapped around in their direction. “If I’m not an NPC, then what am I?”

The villain hummed, one of his fingers tapping lightly on Izuku’s throat. “A party member maybe? But then you don’t seem all that willing to join my side.”

‘*Damn fuckin’ right,’* Kaachan’s voice hissed through the greenette’s mind and the boy had to fight back a smile at the tone.

“Maybe just another aspect of the main quest,” Shigaraki contemplated. “Another player on the same road.”

They fell into silence again and Izuku’s eyes scanned the room. It was nearly empty by now, though he could see a tuft of purple hair around the corner of the far end. Luckily Hitoshi knew better than to come any closer.

“Do you know what you are?”

The question drew Izuku up short, and he could feel the other man tense behind him. There was a sort of confused expression in the blonde’s hazy eyes, gold flickering in and out of the red like he wasn’t quite sure what he was seeing. Like he was struggling to keep control. But over what?

‘*Kaachan, what are you seeing?’*

Red-gold met viridian again and the greenette could see the tic in his boyfriend’s jaw as he clenched it.

‘There’s fog around his hands. A lot *of it. It’s… it’s hard to focus.’*

“What the fuck is that supposed to mean?”

Oh right, Shigaraki.

“I’ll take that as a no then,” Katsuki said hesitantly, a frown on his lips. “Your sensei’s keeping a lot from you then. Maybe you should be more focused on that instead of on some random high school kids.”

Izuku grunted, a low whine of pain tapering off from his throat as Shigaraki’s fingers tightened even more. It was growing hard to breathe, and he had to stretch up onto his toes to relieve some of the pressure. His boyfriend growled in warning but the villain didn’t let up.

“You know why you’re different.” It wasn’t a question, more of a demand, but Katsuki didn’t answer and that only seemed to anger the villain behind them. “You *know* what’s wrong with me. Tell me.”

They were buying for time, Izuku knew that. It was the only reason Kaachan wasn’t telling him everything he wanted to know. Still, he felt a bit of regret ting his stomach at the desperation edging into Shigaraki’s voice. The confusion tapering his words.

They just had to stall long enough for Aizawa to get there.

“*Tell me!* Tell me why Sensei wants you so badly. Tell me why your face makes me want to scream. Tell me why I’m so damn confused,” the man yelled, anger making his grip even stronger.

There were dots on the edges of Izuku’s vision now, his shallow breaths turning into desperate gasps as he reached a hand up and tried to tug at Shigaraki’s wrist. He could hear Katsuki screaming something, hear him yelling at the man behind him but he couldn’t focus long enough to know what the hell was going on.

He needed to breathe.

He needed to breathe.

Katsuki hated hospitals.

They never meant anything good, they smelled like cleaning supplies and medicine, and he could hardly go two feet without being choked with fog. Sure, he was getting better at pushing it aside thanks to Aizawa and Mic's training, but it only grew more difficult when there was *so much of it.*

"Midoriya."

The blonde grunted, lifting his head up from where it was pressed against Izuku's limp hand on the bed. Aizawa stood a few feet away, arms crossed and face dipped into his capture scarf in an attempt to hide his worry. Shouto and Momma Inko had gone down to the café to get some snacks, so they were alone in the room. (Or as alone as they could be with Izuku still laying between them, unconscious, a handprint bruised across the front of his throat.)

"The doctor said he'll be fine," Katsuki mumbled quietly, rubbing at his tired eyes and rolling his shoulders. "It's mostly bruising and a little bit of internal damage, but he didn't use his quirk, so…" Katsuki shrugged. "Could have been a lot worse."

The teacher bobbed his head as he pulled up a chair, leaning his elbows on his knees as he met the other boy's eyes. "I need you to tell me what happened. You did a good job keeping everyone else away, but no one else knows what went on since he portaled out the moment we showed up. Hitoshi said Shigaraki was yelling at you but the words were unclear. Tsukauchi will be here soon to take your statement, but I wanted to know if there was something else happening that you might not be able to tell him."

The implications that this had to do with Katsuki's heritage were clear and he sighed, running his free hand through his hair.

"He showed up because he was… confused, I think," Katsuki grumbled, a typhoon of emotions rolling through his stomach at the memory from only an hour ago. He was pissed at himself for letting the villain get so close, for letting him hurt Izuku. But there was another part of him that was… confused as well, maybe. A part of him that made him feel like he didn't have the full story. "He said his 'sensei' wanted me because of my fox or something. I don't really know. He seemed more concerned with the fact that I felt different."

"*Felt* different?"

Katsuki nodded, frowning. “I’m not positive, it was difficult to see past all the fog he had, but he- I think he’s like me. Like me and Toshi.”

Aizawa’s eyes widened and he straightened up a bit at the whispered words. “You think he’s yokai?”

“A hybrid, specifically,” Katsuki shrugged. “I can’t be sure. Full blooded Yokai feel different than hybrids, and I’ve only ever met Hitoshi so I’m not positive. It felt like it though, felt like how Toshi did when we first met. Like he’s different, like I need to…” he groaned, scrubbing a hand across his face angrily. “Like I need to protect him or some shit.”

“You did say it’s your mission to protect hybrids,” Aizawa hummed, though the expression on his usually plain face told Katsuki the man wasn’t happy about it. “That’s what the Inari wanted from you, right?”

Katsuki couldn’t help the snort that came from his throat and shook his head. “I don’t know *what* the Inari wanted. They weren’t exactly clear. But yeah, that’s the impression I got. I just didn’t expect it to be a fucking villain that I needed to protect. What the hell am I supposed to do? Redeem him? He’s tried killing our class. He released a shit ton of those fucking Nomu things on Hosu like he didn’t care who got hurt. He almost *killed Izuku*.”

The silence sat heavy between them, and part of Katsuki was glad the teacher didn’t try to fill it with platitudes and reassurances. They both knew how fucked the situation was and how hopeless it seemed.

After a few more moments, the man sighed and slumped back again. “You said there was fog? Did you get anything from it?”

Oh yeah… he’d forgotten about that. “Mostly just snippits. He didn’t touch me, but there was… fuck, there was a lot of it. It was pretty hard to ignore honestly, but I didn’t want to get lost in it when Izuku was literally a twitch away from dying.” And fuck hadn’t that been terrifying. Katsuki hadn’t even been that scared when the other boy was fighting his mother, or even at the USJ, because Shigaraki had never gotten so *close* then. “Honestly it was… it was confusing.”

“How so?”

“His fog was different. It was kind of like Mic’s, muddled and layered.”

A hand reaching out, tiny and trembling. The distant bark of a dog.

Screams in the distance and tears on his cheeks. Another hand reaching out, bigger this time.

And then it was gone.

“Gone?”

Katsuki nodded, rubbing at one of his eyes as the exhaustion from the day washed over him again. “Yeah like… I don’t know, like the memories weren’t there anymore, but they were? I don’t know how to explain it. I asked him though, if he knew what he was, and he only got more mad. I don’t think he had a fucking clue and he was pissed that I knew something he didn’t. Pissed that his ‘sensei’ hadn’t told him something.”

Aizawa grunted in agreement, hands clenching together in his lap.

“Zawa, I don’t think-“ Katsuki paused, frowning down at where his and Izuku’s hands lay joined on the bed. “I don’t think Shigaraki is in control.” The words were said so quietly, he wasn’t even sure the teacher had heard him. If it weren’t for the sharp gaze on his when he looked up, he might have thought he hadn’t even said them to begin with. “This sensei of his… I don’t know. The way Shigaraki was talking sounded like, like he was afraid of the guy, kind of. And the fog was so muddled, like even his own mind wasn’t sure what trauma to show me. I have a headache just thinking about it.”

A heavy hand settled on Katsuki’s head and the boy jolted slightly, glancing up at his teacher with an angry frown.

“Listen kid, regardless of what the Inari wants of you, it’s not your responsibility to save those who can’t be saved,” Aizawa grumbled, a knowing tone in his voice. “If that’s what you want to do, then I’ll stand behind you. We can try, but you can’t destroy yourself if this doesn’t go the way you want. Got it?” He waited until Katsuki gave a hesitant nod to continue. “Good, now get some rest. You look like shit and you still need to give a statement to the police when they get here. You did good, kid. Just remember that, okay?”

“Yeah Zawa… okay… and thanks, or whatever.”

“Always, kid. Always.”

Chapter End Notes

Love you all and thank you so much for your support!
This chapter is the beginning of the next arc and I'm super excited to get into it, so I hope you enjoy! I did end up skipping the Final exams because they just really weren't that important to the story plot right now. Hope that's okay!

Drink your water and don't get kidnapped by hot, crusty villains in the mall!

Chapter 45: Momma Bear Endurance Training

Chapter Summary

Day one of Summer Camp Training.

Chapter Notes

IM SO EXCITED FOR THIS ARC I HOPE YOU ARE TO HOLY SHIT.
Anyway, I'm excited for this arc and I think it's going to be a lot of fun. No warnings or anything for this chapter other than adorable fluff. Please enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Midoriya, you’re staying with me.”

Katsuki frowned, glancing up at the hand that laid heavily on his shoulder. They were standing at the back of the class, staring out over the cliff side where the bus had stopped. Apparently they were supposed to *walk* to camp and defeat whatever fucking traps the teachers and the Pussycats had set up. Honestly Katsuki had been looking forward to it. As much as he loved being sandwiched between his boyfriends, beings stuck on a hot bus with twenty other students for hours on end was not his idea of a good time.

“Hah? What for?”

“Is Kaachan in trouble?”

Aizawa rolled his eyes and motioned for the others to leave. “Midoriya the first is doing different training tonight than the rest of you. So go. If you don’t make it to the cabin in time for dinner, you’re not eating.”

That must have been all they needed, because seconds later the Cliffside was empty aside from the kitsune and his teacher.

Trying not to pout, Katsuki glanced up at the other yokai with narrowed eyes. “What kind of fuckin’ training am I doing that the others can’t?”

“I call it Momma Bear Endurance.”

Momma… what now?

Katsuki sneered, but Aizawa only looked vaguely amused at the expression before he turned and began walking off. “You and I will be taking the road to camp,” the man said. “Your job is to stay by me no matter what. Do you understand?”

Which sounded easy enough. In fact… it sounded too easy and Katsuki was sure this was some sort of trap that he should be weary of, even as he began stomping after the man. For a while nothing happened. The most exciting thing being the fact that Katsuki had to take his hoodie off in the heat of the summer sun, leaving him in just his regular tank top. (How the *fuck* Aizawa was still able to walk around in that full jumpsuit in the heat he had no idea. Some sort of witchcraft probably.)

Ten minutes into their walk, Katsuki was about to open his mouth to complain again when something surged through the pack bond like ice in his veins. In fact… it was ice. He could feel his palm chilling, feel the adrenaline pumping through the bond.

Something was happening.

“Midoriya.”

The tone was a warning, and it was only then that the blonde realized he was a few feet away from his teacher already, poised and ready to run in the direction of the forest. It took him a few more seconds to understand what the objective was, what Aizawa was planning with this weird one on one training thing he had going on.

“They’re in trouble,” he argued, glaring at the man from where he was paused a few feet away.

“They’re training,” Aizawa corrected with a raised eyebrow. “And so are you. Your pack bonds are strong, stronger than any bond I’ve seen before. That means you can feel their powers, feel their emotions, and feel their pain. That’s dangerous as a hero because it means you’ll be distracted. All of you will be, but you most of all. The pack will have their endurance training also, but you feel the bond more strongly than the others, not only because you’re the kitsune, but because you’re their leader. We don’t really use these terms in the Ikai, but you’re like their alpha.” Katsuki recoiled a bit at the word and Aizawa snorted, nodding his head. “Yeah, we don’t like it either. The point is that you are the center of the bond. You’re protective of them and that can be dangerous.”

A sharp pain in Katsuki’s side had him grimacing, his muscles tensed

to move again but he forced himself to stay still. “It’s dangerous to protect my pack?”

“It’s dangerous to not be in control.”

With that, the man started walking again, forcing Katsuki to follow. Forcing Katsuki away from the tree line beside them.

“Right now your instincts are to run towards them when they’re in danger or when they’re hurt.” The blonde frowned, but nodded at the assessment. “When you all become pros, you won’t be able to do that. You’ll have different patrol times, different routes. You might be at different agencies or in different cities all together. You can’t afford to get distracted every time one of you gets hurt in a fight because it’s going to be happening all the time. You can’t afford to abandon your own fight just because you can sense that Todoroki or Kirishima are hurt in theirs.”

“I wouldn’t-“

“Wouldn’t you?” The man interrupted, turning towards Katsuki with raised brows. He gestured with one hand towards the trees. “You were just about to run to their defense full well knowing this is only a training exercise.”

And Katsuki didn’t have an answer to that.

The bonding ceremony had definitely helped Katsuki’s Kitsune side relax a lot more than it was before. It was easier to see the fog on his pack members without getting too angry and protective. But the stronger their bond grew, the more they could feel with each other and Katsuki wasn’t used to it yet. His first instinct was still to run and help.

“You have to learn to ignore it, or at the very least control it. If you’re in the middle of protecting someone and it distracts you or you run off to help, you could be putting that innocent person in danger,” Aizawa was still saying. “I’m not blaming you,” he was quick to continue. “You’re new to this and no doubt the others feel the same way with their bond mates. But as far as your yokai side is concerned, it’s *your* job to protect them. It’s *your* job to keep them safe and unharmed and right now your human side is saying it can’t. It’s going to be a challenge, but that’s why we’re training you out of it.”

Katsuki gasped as pain bloomed across the side of his face and he felt Hanta’s panic through the bond marks around his arms, felt them flare

to life as if in warning. His steps stuttered and he felt himself growl, the sound echoing through the open street and off the trunks of the trees.

“How-“ the blonde paused, gritting his teeth and clenching his fists as he forced himself to keep walking. “How did you deal with it? With my- with Mitsuki?”

The teacher was quiet for a while before sighing. “Honestly, we didn’t have much trouble with it at all. Mitsuki and I were born in a time of war, but by the time we aged to bond, it was over and there was peace again,” he shrugged. “Our pack has always been very small. In our prime, we had only four pack members, now there is just the two of us left. We also were not training to be heroes like you are. While our bond was strong when I lived in the Ikai, it was nowhere near as strong as yours is with your pack. So I cannot tell you what to expect or how exactly to fix it.” The man sounded apologetic for a moment, though his eyes didn’t stray from the path ahead. “I can give you guidelines and advice, but it’s up to you to figure out what works best for the nine of you. You need to learn how to work around your disadvantages.”

Work around your disadvantages.

It was easier said than done.

Yes, Katsuki was aware it was a training exercise and the others wouldn’t be terribly hurt from it… but it felt like going against everything he was to just let them go through it alone.

They’re not alone, he had to remind himself constantly the closer they grew to the cabins in the distance. *They’re not alone and they can take care of themselves.*

That’s really what helped in the long run.

Because Katsuki knew the others could handle themselves. They were strong as fuck, they were smart, and they knew what they were doing. Even Izuku and Mei, who were allowed to accompany them on the trip to help with training, were capable of holding their own. He had no doubt Mei was having the time of her life showing off her support items in whatever fight they were having through the trees, and Izuku had his bo staff and gauntlets with him for protection, plus whatever else he’d smuggled away in that obnoxious backpack of his.

They’d made it to the finals of the sports festival. They’d fought

together in the USJ. They each battled a yokai in the Ikai. They were *strong*.

He *knew* they weren't in danger. He knew it.

But reminding himself of it was difficult when his body was being flooded with bond energy. Like little warning notifications popping up on his phone to let him know when he had messages or alarms. And Katsuki *hated* having those stupid little icons at the top of his screen. Hated leaving them unread and waiting.

They had to pause a few times in the road when someone got hurt or panicked and Katsuki had to physically ground himself so he didn't go running. And once, when he felt a rib crack coming through Izuku's circle around his chest, he was already at the forest line, his claws digging into the tree bark, before he was able to stop himself.

Aizawa hadn't said anything, only stood there in the center of the street waiting for him to pull himself back together. He didn't say anything when the boy pried his claws out of the bark, didn't say anything when he half stumbled back to his side, only held out an arm and let Katsuki cling to it as he struggled to catch his breath.

"Good job," the man hummed once they gotten to the main cabin and Katsuki collapsed into the couch. "You did better than I expected. Did you contact any of them on the way?"

The blonde grunted, but shook his head and sighed. "No. Figured that'd be cheating."

"Not necessarily," the man shrugged, crossing his arms as he leaned up against the doorway. "It's good to not rely on it since you could become dependent on that communication, but it's not necessarily a bad thing. The goal is to not let it distract you or the others, but if it helps you to keep control to check in on them if you think it's safe to do so, then you should. Just be careful how often or when you do it. And be aware that if they don't reply, it's not an excuse for you to go running to them anyway."

Katsuki grunted and dug his face into the cushion. "Work around my disadvantages."

"Yes," Aizawa nodded. "But also know when to use them as an advantage. It's a fine line and it's the same with quirks. But it all comes down to control in the end. The lack of it can and will get you or the others killed."

“Wait seriously? We’re playing tag?”

It almost sounded too good to be true, if Izuku was honest. While the rest of the class was working on perfecting their quirks, the pack was on Aizawa-duty for the first day of camp. And while the first trial of just getting to camp had told the greenette that this was not going to be an easy and fun camp experience, he honestly hadn’t expected this.

Shouto frowned beside him. “I’ve never played tag. What are the rules?”

“The nine of you are the exception to the training the rest of Class 1-A and 1-B will be doing,” their teacher told the pack who had all gathered in the middle of a clearing in the woods. “You need extra training that the others do not, so we’ll be splitting your training between the two halves of the day. This is not a means to slack, the opposite actually. I fully expect you to work even harder during your quirk training to be able to stay in line with the rest of your class who is working all day. However, in the mornings we’ll be training your pack bonds. Midoriya number one has already begun this training, but the rest of you will need it as well.”

Before the man had even stopped talking, Denki’s hand was in the air, waving frantically.

“Sensei! How is playing tag going to help us with the bond?”

“I will be splitting you into three groups of three,” he began, holding up three small foam balls in his fingers- one black, one red, and one green. “Each team will get a ball to begin with. The person with the ball is ‘it’ and is the only person on your team able to tag. Your goal is to tag the person with the ball on the opposite team while keeping your ball away. You can do that by passing the ball to other members of your team, making them ‘it’ instead.”

Denki hummed, tapping a finger to his chin in contemplation. “So like, hot potato, tag, and capture the flag all at once?”

Aizawa shrugged. “Sure.”

“What happens if we tag a person with the ball?” Mina asked, raising her hand in question.

“Then their entire team is out. If you tag someone without a ball, they are out until their ball holder can come and tag them back into the

game. The object is keep away, but you'll be expected to use your bond to your advantage during this game. For now, I want you to focus on that, which means no quirks." A smirk appeared on the man's face when the others groaned, but Izuku was already running through plans on how to succeed depending on who his team members would be. "Eventually throughout the week we'll add in your quirks as well. Now get in groups as I call them."

In the end the groups ended up being split between the pack parents. Izuku ended up with Denki and Hanta, Kaachan got Mei and Mina, and Shouto got Hitoshi and Eijirou. The greenette couldn't help but notice that their teacher had broken them up in a very specific way.

"How do you mean?" Denki frowned, glancing around at their respective groups.

Izuku hummed, pointing towards Kaachan's group. "Well, everyone knows that Mei and I work best when we're together, not apart. And you and Toshi are dating, and Mina and Eijirou are dating, so he's split us all up that way. But he also didn't give Eijirou to Kaachan because he knew how well *they* work together. And he kept Hitoshi away from Kaachan too, because they're connected by their heritage in a way the rest of us aren't. It's really smart actually because the groups are very evened out stats wise."

"Whaaa- but the other two groups have the power houses!" Denki whined.

Hanta snorted, knocking his knuckle against Denki's temple. "Ouch bro, not cool. Besides, you're a huge powerhouse now that you've got those grounding boots Mei made for you, and the absorbent wrist bands. Besides, we can't use our quirks! And I don't know if anyone could out mastermind Izuku without one, so I think we're pretty evenly matched with the others."

"Right! We just need to come up with a good plan! Right now, we have to work without your quirks," Izuku hummed, tapping his pen to his notebook in contemplation. "Which is advantage to me. And I'd say we've all gotten pretty decent at communicating through the bond, even one on one. The problem comes in creating the little subpockets of communication, like radio channels, because we've never had to do that before. So trying to communicate with the both of you without letting it slip to the others is going to be a challenge."

"So smart," Denki awed.

“We can use that though because if it’s going to be worse for anyone, it’s going to be worse for Kaachan and Toshi. They’re the ones that have the stronger mental connection to the rest of us,” Izuku mumbled, scribbling the basics of a plan down on the notebook before them. “Toshi’s quirk automatically gives him an advantage even if he isn’t using it, because it enhances his mental capacities. Kaachan is our pack mom, and the only other yokai, so obviously his connection is going to be super strong too. That could give us a good advantage though and we can use that against them if we’re careful about it.”

Hanta hummed, a smirk spreading wide across his face. “You want to trick them?”

“Yeah, yeah I do!”

The game ended up lasting hours, drawing well close to lunch time by the time they’d finished.

Izuku was exhausted. He honestly hadn’t thought the game would have resulted in so much *running*- and honestly he didn’t think it was entirely fair that Kaachan was still so *fast* without his quirk or his full shift.

Their plan had worked for a while, with them opening the bond to let hints slip through as to where they were or which one of them had the ball, only to close it when they were discussing their actual plans. The problem was that the other teams started to catch on and began to pick up on the method as well. So it only worked a few times before they had to rework their strategy. Lucky for them, Izuku *was* a mastermind after all.

“Stay still, bro! Running away isn’t manly!”

Katsuki grinned, his cackle echoing through the clearing and bouncing off the trees surrounding them. He stood on the opposite end as Eijirou, his red-headed best friend glaring at him, knees bent and ready to spring into action at a moment’s notice. A red ball ball waited in his hands, an orange one in Katsuki’s. It was a standoff if the blonde had ever seen one, and unfortunately they were both fairly even when it came to hand to hand combat.

“Sounds like someone isn’t good enough,” Katsuki called back with a manic grin, the sight of something pink flitting into view from behind the oblivious redhead. “Come at me then, I won’t even run!”

Katsuki wasn't quite sure what he expected when Aizawa told them they were playing *tag* of all things. But honestly, he was having a blast. Pun totally intended. As reluctant as he was to admit it, Izuku was right. He *did* love running around in the woods like this, free from the endless noise of the large cities, free from the constant need to block out the emotions and fog he fought against on a daily basis. Even now, when he wasn't allowed to use his full shift, he felt lighter than before. Like he couldn't get rid of the grin stretching its way across his face.

"Come on, Shark Week! Come and get me!"

A moment later and Eijirou was charging at him. It was a matter of who was faster really. They both had their team's ball, red against orange, so they were both targets. Both It. It was a matter of who could touch who first. The opportunity for an entire group to be out.

But that wasn't any fun and Katsuki had a plan.

As soon as the redhead grew close enough, Katsuki smirked, crouching down himself and tossing his own ball up into the air. Mina, who'd been following Eiji from behind took the opportunity immediately, launching herself into the air and using Eijirou's shoulders as a stepping stone to grab the ball midair just as Ejirou's hand smacked against Katsuki's shoulder. Before he could truly be considered out, however, Mina's free hand tapped the blonde's head as she flipped over him.

"W-wha?"

Katsuki snorted in amusement as Eijirou struggled to regain his balance, too little too late as the two other teens took off in a sprint.

"Sorry, Eiji, but consider it training!" As soon as they were ducked into the shadows of the trees, Mei passed by them and snatched the ball from Mina's outstretched hand. "Split off! He'll come for us since he didn't see you!"

And they were off again.

It was nice, listening to the laughs of his pack echoing through the leaves. Hearing the groans of defeat and the cries of betrayal. Their bonds sang across his skin with each burst of excitement and amusement, and though their minds were closed off to each other's thoughts, he could still feel their presence pushing up against him. Even if the rest of the week wasn't as easy or fun as this (which he

expected it wouldn't be), Katsuki could be grateful that Aizawa let them have this moment to just have fun, even if he did disguise it as training. It was relieving considering everything that had happened lately.

A shock of white and red passed the corner of his eye, pulling him from his musings, but not fast enough. After a sharp tug backwards, Katsuki was spun and shoved up against a tree, Mei and Mina nowhere to be seen, instead a pair of mismatched eyes glowering down at him.

Shouto had his hands on either side of Katsuki's head, no ball in sight, so he let himself relax just for a second as he stared into those burning eyes. This close he could feel the heat of the other boy, taste the frost across his tongue and the smell of woodfire in the breeze. It settled something inside of him he didn't know was restless.

"You look happy here," Shouto mumbled quietly, ducking his head slightly so their lips brushed together. "It's nice to see you laughing like this. You're beautiful when you smile."

Katsuki snorted, raising a cool eyebrow. "Bitch, I'm beautiful all the time."

The dual-haired boy hummed, leaning forward to press a kiss to the blonde's cheekbone. "That you are."

"Shouto," Katsuki warned, earning him a questioning hum when Shouto trailed his kisses down to Katsuki's jaw, nibbling softly at his ear. "We're in the middle of a training exercise. This isn't allowed."

"Aizawa isn't here," Shouto responded, eye raising to meet Katsuki's with a mischievous look. "No one else is around. Besides," he continued, teeth biting at Katsuki's jaw once more before moving his hands to the kitsune's hips, "I can't help myself when you look so delicious, running around in this damn tank top." He tugged at the offending material with what almost looked like a pout. "It leaves nothing to the imagination, and yet I wish it wasn't there.'

Before Katsuki could even think about the repercussions of his actions, he was surging forward, hands grasping at long red and white hair, lips crashing into lips. Their tongues fought for dominance, hands grasping and tugging, nails digging into muscle. It was already hot outside from the summer heat, but Katsuki could all but feel his insides burning with need. *Fuck* he loved the way Shouto tasted. Loved the way he felt between his hands.

He wanted nothing more than to drop to his knees right there in the forest and-

Shouto shifted, one hand disappearing behind him as a flash of purple rushed by.

“Sorry, love,” Shouto whispered when Katsuki pulled back to look at something that was no longer there. “I took a note out of Izuku’s book.”

“Ha?”

Shouto only smiled reaching one hand up to cup Katsuki’s cheek as he leaned in for a quick peck. “I’m sure someone will come find you in time.” And with that, he took a few steps backwards, leaving Katsuki hot and wanting, as he held up his other hand. Resting in his palms was a red ball. A red ball that Katsuki had *thought* was with Hitoshi at the time.

“You little *fucker-*“ Katsuki sneered, embarrassed and angry and… *proud as fuck*. “See if I ever make soba for you *ever again! Get back here you fucker!”*

He was left only with the sound of Shouto’s laugher fluttering through the trees.

Though Izuku was exhausted by the time they made it back to the cabins for lunch, he had to admit it was actually a lot of fun, and they had ended up learning a lot on how to work together and plan around things like their bond communication. The grin that had spread across his face in the beginning stages of the game was as bright as ever, his cheeks beginning to burn with the strain.

“Man, I’m exhausted!”

Izuku let out a loud ‘oof’ and giggled when Eijirou draped himself over the shorter boy’s back dramatically, leaving Izuku to steady his footing so he didn’t buckle under the weight. The others were all gathered around them, mostly sprawled out in various stages of exhaustion themselves, draped over one another like a pile of throw blankets and human shaped pillows. Kaachan had already sprinted off towards the outdoor kitchen area where Momo and Iida were *attempting* to cook lunch, only to be kicked out when the blonde got close enough to scream at their supposed incompetence. The only ones he allowed to join him were Sato, Kouda, Uraraka and Tsu since they

seemed to know what they were doing.

Class 1-A had already finished their training by the time the pack made it back to the cabins, and Class 1-B was slowly trickling in when Izuku allowed Eiji's weight to collapse him onto Hanta and Denki's pile of limbs, making the four of them groan at the weigh.

"That was fun though," the greenette smiled, turning his head on Hanta's shoulder until he could face the others. "It honestly took longer than I thought! I didn't think a game of tag could last that long!"

"Ugh! Don't remind me! My legs are going to be sore for days," Denki groaned, thumping his head back onto the grass. "And it's only day one! We haven't even started quirk training yet!

A bare pink foot stretched out and poked Denki in the cheek, Mina letting out a giggle when the electric blonde went to snap at her toes only to barely miss. "Don't complain, Denks! At least you guys won! The KitKat Squad was doing so well and then you guys just had to go and snap it out from under us!"

"I'm pretty sure your team was the team out first," Shouto smirked when he shuffled up towards them, dropping into a criss-cross position and not even batting an eye when Mei dropped into his lap with a grin. "I managed to knock Katsuki out of the game and we got the rest of you while you were trying to look for him. Leaving just us and Izuku's team."

Pouting, Mina kicked at the taller boy's knee and rolled over dramatically until she was sprawled across Hitoshi's stomach. "Don't be mean, Shouchan! We almost had you! I still think you cheated!"

"Get off me, you freak," Hitoshi grumbled, though he made no move to push the pink girl off. "It's fuckin' hot."

"No. You're comfy."

"I think we all did incredibly well," Izuku continued their conversation, agreeing with Hitoshi on the heat as he wiggled out from between the pile of limbs he'd found himself in. He sidled up to Shouto's cold side and snuggled up against his arm. "Especially considering we couldn't use quirks! And Kaachan didn't use his full shift either! Though, I still think he might have been tracking us by scent. Which I *would* consider cheating if it wasn't something he couldn't turn off. Still, it was fun and educational! Now we have more

practice shutting off our lines of communication if needed! Imagine all the rest of the things we could do as we learn how to better wield our bond? Imagine the potential for stealth missions! Or if Toshi becomes an underground hero and infiltrates secret gangs and stuff? He could totally leak us information without anyone even knowing! Or if a villain had some sort of vocal activation quirk? We could bypass it completely by just not talking to each other!”

He paused as he noticed the others smiling brightly at him, his cheeks flaming up as he realized he was mumbling.

Denki giggled and poked his cheek from where he was on the ground. “Nerd alert!”

“Hey!”

“Don’t worry,” Shouto hummed, pressing a soft kiss to the boy’s temple. “I think it’s cute when you ramble.”

And if that didn’t just serve to make him even *more* red.

“Oi losers! Come get your food before it’s all gone! I’m not makin’ any extra!”

Chapter End Notes

> This was a lot of fun to write, even if I'm not 100% happy with how it turned out. But oh well! Hope you guys liked it! Just remember that I'm very *loosely* following canon plot. So some things will happen but maybe differently than normal and somethings won't happen at all. I'm sure that'll leave you guessing! But it should hopefully all work out!
> Drink your water! (I can officially demand this of you because I've started drinking water too. XD)

Chapter 46: It Isn't Fair

Chapter Summary

Training Camp goes up in flames.

Chapter Notes

IM BACK! Sort of. I love you all, please read the note at the beginning and I'm sorry this chapter is so short. (Also apologies if there are typos or anything. I didn't have time to edit before uploading.)

Also a note, there WILL BE SPOILERS IN THIS CHAPTER IF YOU ARE NOT CAUGHT UP ON THE MANGA. (Mostly Touya related.) However, I'm not sticking with the exact backstory that Horikoshi wrote because it doesn't fit my story. So don't @ me bros.

TRIGGER WARNINGS:
Mentions of child abuse (in the past)
Mentions of character death (in the past)
Mentions of forced prostitution (in the past)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Author's Note-

Hi everyone! I want to first off assure you that this IS A CHAPTER. Don't worry, it's just a lot shorter than it usually is. I hope that's okay. I'm also not happy with it like, at all, but I also felt really bad for not updating for so long! I just wanted to give you guys some quick life updates in the hope that you'll forgive me! I am currently working towards my Masters in Creative Writing right now and because of that a lot of my writing energy is going towards class assignments and the novel I'm writing for my master's thesis. I'm also writing another novel series on the side (a lot of which is being written as assignments for various classes) so I haven't had a lot of time for staying up to date on my fanfics. I promise though, I haven't abandoned any of them! I know a lot of you are reading multiple fics I'm writing so you'll probably see this message a few times throughout the next few updates, but I promise I'm still working on them all, they're just very slow going and most of my energy and inspiration is going towards school projects. I'm also trying to at least get the next chapters uploaded for all of my fics this month because I'll be participating in

NaNoWriMo (National Novel Writing Month) in November and will have even LESS time to write than I have recently. That all being said, I REALLY appreciate you all being patient with me and my sporadic updates. I also apologize for how terrible this chapter is but I just really wanted to get it written and out there. The next few hopefully will be better! (And I might come back and edit this one when my brain is working better, we'll see. I'll let you know if I do!)

I love you all so much! Thank you for your crazy support!

- Your local Trash Goblin

“Hey kid, I uh- I don’t think you’re supposed to be out here.”

Izuku made sure his footsteps were loud enough to announce his presence as he climbed up the side of the mountain to the little cave in its side. The boy from earlier- Kota, he thinks his name was- was sat on the cliff edge, his little feet hanging over and his back hunched and tense with anger. Izuku and Shouto had been- uhhh, definitely not making out- in the woods when they saw the boy stomp past, completely unknowing that the two hero-students were even there. When they noticed he wasn’t with an adult or another student, they quickly followed to make sure he was okay.

If the angry tears were anything to go by, he definitely wasn’t.

“Go away!”

Izuku frowned, nodding at Shouto before both of them took up a seat on either side of the boy. Not too close to make him uncomfortable, but close enough to reach out for him if the boy fell. The cliff wasn’t terribly high, but it was high enough for a kid his age to not make it if he tipped over the edge.

“Can you tell us what’s wrong? Does your aunt know you’re out here,” Shouto asked, his voice quiet and his head tilted just slightly so he could try and catch a glimpse of Kota’s face.

But the boy only huffed and glared at them, crossing his arms in front of his chest and dutifully pretending to ignore the fact that he’d been caught crying in the dark by himself. “I’m not talking to some stupid *heroes*.”

The word was spat with a venom that surprised Izuku.

Obviously not everyone liked heroes, but to find kids Kota's age that didn't was a shock if he was being honest. Izuku had been obsessed since he had seen his first All Might feature at the age of 2, so he couldn't really imagine *not* wanting to be a hero. Still, the way that Kota said it was so harsh and broken that Izuku couldn't help but want to comfort the boy. "I take it you don't like heroes," Izuku said quietly.

"No shit, Sherlock."

The cursing had Izuku letting out a loud guffaw and Shouto snorted beside them. "You- okay, we'll just ignore that for now. Can you tell me why? Your aunt is a hero, you know. And your parents were too. Why don't you like them?"

"Being a hero is stupid," Kota growled back at them, his little fists clenching under his armpits where he was hiding them. "It makes you stupid because you leave your family to go rescue *other people* and then you don't come back."

Oh.

Izuku had heard about Water Hose on the news. He'd done an analysis on them years ago because they were one of the few hero duo's that were actually successful. He'd been obsessed with finding duos when he was younger because he was convinced he and Kaachan were going to be the world's best hero duo ever, that they were going to be the first duo as Number One.

The death of Water Hose had been a hard blow to the entire community, Izuku couldn't imagine how hard of a blow it'd be to their actual kid.

"You blame them."

Shouto didn't phrase it like a question, but Kota tensed up like it was one. Like it was an accusation. "Of course I do! They- they *left* me! They left and they didn't come back!"

"They saved the lives of ten other people that day," Shouto countered, his eyes trailed on the horizon and his body relaxed with his hands in his lap and his feet kicking out in front of him. "They might not have come home, but they died doing something great. They died making the world a better place."

"I don't *care!*"

Kota had been so quiet and angry the whole time they'd been at the camp that Izuku forgot sometimes just how *young* he was. He forgot how things didn't always make sense when you weren't old enough to understand that pain and anger doesn't fix things. But now the boy was standing and screaming at them, pacing away the small space in front of the cave with fury twisted on his face. "I don't care! I don't! Why did they have to die? Why are their lives less important than the people they saved? How is that fair?"

"It's not."

The boy froze, turning wide, tear-filled eyes towards Izuku even though the greenette was staring off at the trees, a frown on his face. "It's not fair, you're right. People die and it hurts. People disappoint you and it hurts. People leave you and it hurts." He remembers the day when he was three and he'd asked his mom why he and Kaachan didn't have dads like the rest of the kids at school. He remembered when she had to sit them down and tell them that their dads had left and never come home. That it wasn't fair but that's how it was. "Sometimes people leave you on purpose and it's mean and it sucks but you have to deal with it. Other times they leave to protect you because them being there puts you in danger," he says, thinking about blonde hair and red eyes.

After a moment, he turned back to Kota with a soft smile and shrugged. "I'm not going to tell you that it's fair or that you should get over it. When people leave you, it hurts and it'll keep hurting. But I also don't think it's fair that you're disrespecting your parents like that."

"W-what? I'm not!"

"You are," Izuku responded evenly, though not unkindly. "Your parents went out there to make the world a better place for *you*. They became heroes because they wanted the world that you grew up in to be better than the one they lived in. They were incredible heroes who saved hundreds of lives and it's not fair to them that you have decided their sacrifice for *you* wasn't worth it."

Tears were sliding their way over his cheeks again and Izuku stood then, reaching out to put a hand on the kid's head.

"I know it hurts, Kota. I won't pretend to know what it feels like to have a parent die, but I know what it feels like when they leave you. I promise your parents loved you more than anything else in the

world," he said quietly, crouching down to catch the boy's gaze in his own. "I promise you they would never have left you if they had the choice. But they did and because of that ten people are alive right now. I know it's not fair. I know it hurts. But you can't blame them for that. Love them instead. Be proud of them instead. They were *heroes*, Kota. That's something incredible."

"I haven't lost a parent," Shouto said from his position on the cliffs edge as he turned to face them both, "not like you have at least. But I did lose my older brother. My hero. He used to protect me when I was little from a really bad villain. He'd go and fight him every day so that the villain didn't hurt me and my mom and my siblings. He got hurt so we didn't have to." Izuku's fingers tightened on Kota's shoulders as he recalled the stories Shouto told them of his brother. "And then one day he made me go away and hide because the villain was really mad. One day, he protected me so that I wouldn't get hurt any more than I already was."

Kota sniffled, scrubbing at his face and frowning at Shouto. "W-what happened to him?"

"He didn't come back," Shouta said meaningfully, meeting Kota's wide gaze. "He protected me and he paid the price for it, just like your parents did. But I don't hate him for it. I don't hate heroes for it. I miss him, but he makes me strive harder every day to be even half of the hero he was. He wouldn't want me to hold onto that hate, and your parents wouldn't either."

It wasn't often Shouto talked about Touya. Izuku and Katsuki were the only ones he'd told and even then it wasn't much. He'd told their mom a little bit, just enough for her to know what happened, but he didn't go into depth.

To hear him now, talking to Kota about his *hero* made Izuku's eyes tear up.

"Okay…"

They both glanced down at the small boy who was clenching his hands in his fists. "Okay. I-I'll try… I'll be better."

Izuku wasn't sure how long they stayed up there after that. The moon was high in the sky and they'd long ago sent a message to the pack to let them know they were okay but wouldn't be coming back just yet. Which was fine, the only training they had at the moment was a test of courage or something that Aizawa-Sensei had set up for them in the

woods. If they hadn't been ordered back yet then their teacher probably didn't care much that they were missing it.

"Fire."

Izuku hummed, turning his head to glance at Kota from where he was laying on the ground next to Shouto. The boy's eyes were wide with panic and it had Izuku jumping immediately into action, following the boy's line of sight towards the blazing blue flames licking across the skyline.

"Shouto, we have to get back-"

"Well, well, well. What do we have here?"

"Th-that's the villain that killed my mom and dad!"

"I'm not leaving you, Shouto!"

"Just go, Izuku! Take Kota!"

"Aizawa-Sensei!"

"The villains are here for someone called Kaachan-"

"Damnit, Shouto, I'm not weak!"

"Just fucking take my hand, Katsuki. You're staying with us."

"Kaachan!"

"Don't come, Izuku…"

The hand was heavy on the back of Katsuki's spine, burnt fingers wrapping around the sides of his throat like a threat.

And it was one, he wasn't stupid enough to think any differently. But it'd been so hard to concentrate, so hard to *breathe* through the fog shoving its way down his throat, wafting off the burnt motherfucker in waves and waves. It'd taken everything in the blonde to just see *through* it enough to catch a glimpse of Izuku's terrified green eyes and the devastation on Shouto's usually blank face. Taken everything to whisper those three words before he was tugged backwards into a void of nothing but *fog*.

Fuck, it was like he couldn't focus on anything. Like he couldn't tell what was real and what wasn't. The ground he collapsed on felt unsteady, seconds away from crumbling again just like it had before. The air in his lungs felt heavy like dust and ash, the pressure on his chest like a ton of concrete had been dumped on top of him.

And then there were the burns.

Fuck, the burns.

His hands were unharmed as he held himself up on all fours, pale against the wooden floorboards, but he could see the mottled purple scars and the ancient burns from a life long ago lost. He could hear his father's scream echoing through the house, hear his brother crying behind him from where he'd collapsed from exhaustion. There was vomit on the floor, but he couldn't tell if it was real or not. The scent of smoke clinging to him was too strong to tell, and his fingers refused to move from where he was desperately clutching at the ground.

A collapsed building.

Someone screaming his name.

A hill far away where no one could see him burn.

"What's wrong with him?"

"I told you not to hurt him!"

"I fuckin' didn't, you crusty bitch. He was fine until we went through the warp gate."

"Aw, he's not even a little bloody."

Shut up, shut up, shut UP!

God the voices were all melding together in his head and he couldn't tell what was real and what wasn't. He could hear Shouta's voice yelling for him through the chaos, hear it echo like agony across the support beam holding him down. He could hear Fuyumi's kind sniffling as she worked to bandage his hands after training. Could hear sirens, an inferno, a father's fury.

"Just stop," he couldn't help but sob, his voice sounding foreign to his own ears. When was the last time he'd even spoken? Before his father killed him? Or before the building collapsed? "Please- god fuck, just make it stop."

Someone crouched in front of him, someone familiar. He could feel their fog pressing against his senses, his mind. His hands felt dry, his cheeks cracked and broken. It was all too much, too painful… He was suffocating, his lungs collapsing in on themselves, his skin flaking off until he was nothing but bare bones left. Briefly he wondered if this is what it felt like to die. It felt different than the other times he'd died- not peaceful like the crushing had been, but not agonizingly hot like his father's flames. Instead it was like he was a dying star, surface concaving inward as the air from his lungs was syphoned into space. His light ripped away from him and replaced with nothing but that damned, *awful* fog.

Focus, little starlight. You are not alone. You never have been.

"What is that? What is he doing?"

"Is he… is he glowing?"

The warmth in the center of his forehead burst to life like a tree struck by lightning, the connection between him and his pack burning with a familiarity that all but forced air into his lungs.

He could feel them, miles and miles away, but safe and alive. Their hearts beat with his, their lungs expanded with every breath he took. Denki's lightning sparked across his fingertips, Eijirou's hardening rippled over his shoulders. He could taste Mina's acid mixing with Hatsume's oil in the back of his throat. Hanta's steady breathing and calming mantra's rose and fell in his chest, and Hitoshi's quiet mind echoed between his ears.

And then there was Izuku and Shouto.

He could feel them in his heart, in the way his ribs wrapped around it like a protective cage.

He could feel the panic and fear flooding through them, the worry for *him*… but he could also feel their love and the overwhelming sense of *family*. Of belonging. Of having someone there to help when he needed them.

His father wasn't there to burn him.

The building beneath his feet was sturdy.

He wasn't decaying away.

There you are, my little one. Keep shining. They will always see your light.

"Oi, brat-"

Katsuki sucked in a breath like he'd been desperate for it –*he was* –and glanced up to see piercing red eyes glaring down at him behind an all too familiar ashen hand.

"S-Shigaraki," the blonde croaked, his vision going blurry around the edges when the other's fog drifted too close.

"The fuck is wrong with you?"

And Katsuki couldn't focus. He couldn't think of how to thread his words into sentences, couldn't think of a single curse to spit in the villain's direction. His mind was cast out to sea, desperately clinging to the lifeboat that was his pack while the ocean of memories tried to swallow him whole. "You need-" he paused, trying to clear away the smoke clinging to the inside of his throat, grating against his voice like stones in a tumbler. "Fucking back *up*. I can't- I can't breathe without all your- *shit*- without all of your fucking trauma trying to fucking suffocate me."

"Our trauma?" Katsuki spared a glance for the burnt piece of shit off to the side of the door, noting his confusion and hesitance.

"Yeah, I can- I can fucking see your trauma you burnt piece of shit. It's part of my- fuckin- just *back off*-"

Much to his surprise, they did. Slowly the others began to leave the room, Shigaraki grumbling about how he was "too tired for this shit, call me back when he's not having a mental breakdown." He wasn't

sure if someone ordered the others to leave or not. He could barely focus on drawing actual air into his lungs and keeping his heart beating in time with the others. He needed to *focus*. Draw on the techniques he'd been working on with Aizawa and Mic. Breathe in and out, block out the images, push the smoke away. Keep his hands to himself, keep his mind attached to the others. This was his body and he wasn't going to let anyone else into it that didn't belong.

My name is Midoriya Katsuki. I'm almost 16. My mom is Inko. My boyfriends are Izuku and Shouto.

There are no burns grafted onto my skin. There are no claw marks etched into my throat. I have a body.

My name is Midoriya Katsuki. I'm almost 16. My mom is Inko. My boyfriends are Izuku and Shouto.

There are no burns grafted onto my skin. There are no claw marks etched into my throat. I have a body.

By the time he could focus again, the sky outside the dingy window was dim and the burnt bitch was the only one left. He was practically drowning in fog, but he stayed in the far corner away from Katsuki and the Kitsune was able to ignore the familiar flames against his skin and the burn of fresh bruises he knew weren't actually there.

"You done freaking out yet?"

A snarl escaped Katsuki's lips but he still slumped in the chair, the quirk suppressant cuffs on his wrists weighing heavy between his legs. "Fuck off, bacon bitch," he snapped, but the retort was weak and Katsuki was exhausted. "Fuckin' had to be me. What the hell are you all planning?"

The older man grunted, shrugging his shoulders and leaning back in his own chair. "Boss wanted you. He's been actin' real weird lately and said you'll know why. Also figured you've got a nasty temper and might be a good addition to our group, but I figure that's not your cup of tea what with your whole declaration to be a symbol or whatever. The name is Dabi, and this, Blasty, is the League of villains." The name had Katsuki snarling but the other guy shrugged and ignored the look. "Look, I don't like you, you don't like me, but you might as well cooperate because who knows what's going to happen if you don't. I might have to get… creative," he smirked, wiggling his fingers a little to show off the lick of blue flames.

Familiar blue flames.

Familiar.

“Tou-chan! Look, look!”

Katsuki was holding up his hand- small and pudgy- to show off the bright red flames flickering between his fingers. He was smiling, bigger than he remembered smiling in a long time, and Touya was smiling back at him.

“That’s great, Shou. Now we match!”

Katsuki giggled but shook his head. “Nu-uh! Mine is red, yours is blue!” He couldn’t help the pout that crossed his face when he poked at his brother’s hand, like he was trying to summon the blue flames. “I wish I could do blue fire. It’s so pretty. All I have is ugly red like dad’s…”

“I think your flames are pretty too, peppermint,” Touya smiled, sitting down to pull the four year old into his lap. He put their hands between them, his bigger fingers cradling Katsuki’s smaller ones. “Look, watch what happens,” he said as blue flames began to lick around Katsuki’s tiny hands. They didn’t burn, but he could feel the heat of them as the danced around his own fingers, mixing with his red flames like a beautiful dance of colours. Katsuki watched with wide, awe-filled eyes as his brother made the flames dance and shift, the almost white-purple mix of flames glittering off the windows and metal fixtures of the lights.

“So pretty,” he whispered.

“I love you, Shou. Always remember that, okay? No matter what happens, no matter where I am or where you are, we’ll always have this. Always.”

That was it. Sure, Katsuki had been seeing the flames- feeling the bruises… hearing the screams- ever since Dabi had grabbed him in the forest. But with so many different memories trying to slam into him at once it had been hard to connect the dots needed. Hard to remember that he’d seen those blue flames before.

“How are you here?” Dabi raised an eyebrow, mild confusion and amusement filling those blue eyes- blue eyes just like Endeavor’s, blue eyes just like Shouto’s burnt side. There was no way. There was no way and yet here he was, standing in front of Katsuki like a ghost. “I

saw you die. I saw-“ a sob wrecks through his throat at the sharp memory of a room engulfed in flames. “*Fuck*… no- it’s not… that wasn’t me-“

“Boss was right,” Dabi grunted, rolling his eyes when Katsuki looked back up at him. “You are nuts.”

A growl escaped the blonde as he thrashed against his bonds, a righteous anger flooding him, burning his insides. Logically he knew he was losing control. He knew the past few hours, the barrage of so *much* all at once, the distance from his pack, was making him weaker, making him lose who he was. He hadn’t seen so many memories at once before. Or at all really. It had been Shouto, then Mic and Aizawa, a little bit of Hitoshi and the others. But nothing as dark and suffocating as the League.

It made sense, he supposed, that the villains would be suffering. Would have suffered. Everyone had a tragic backstory when you were trying to take over the world.

But it made it harder to hold onto himself.

“You *left him*,” Katsuki snapped, his sharp fangs bared and his tails thrashing behind him like vipers. He couldn’t feel the familiar *pop pop pop* of his quirk between his palms, but the Kitsune wasn’t gone. The Kitsune was always there no matter where he was. “You knew how dangerous he was and you just- you just left him there to go through it just like you.”

Dabi was frowning now, his eyebrows tugged together in confusion at the sight before him. “What the hell are you talking about?”

“Endeavor!”

The name had the fire user tensing immediately, his own teeth bared in warning. “Watch what you say, brat.”

“You *knew* who he was and you just- you just left them all there to *suffer*,” Katsuki snapped, ignoring the warning. He wasn’t sure if he’d be able to stop even if he wanted to. He knew this was a bad idea, airing the guy’s dirty laundry like this, but the demon inside of him was raging for his pack, for his mate. It was protective and angry that Dabi- *Touya*- could have done something and *didn’t*. “You were fucking alive this whole time and you did *nothing* when he turned to Shouto. You did nothi-“

Dabi's hand around his throat caught him off guard and Katuski choked against the grasp, grunting when the villain loomed over him and sneered.

"You don't know what you're talking about," Dabi hissed, his nails drawing blood and his fingers cutting off Katsuki's air supply. "You have *no idea* what really happened. I don't care what you're seeing or what you know. You don't get to tell me about my past."

"You left them-" Katsuki rasped.

"I was *thirteen,"* Dabi yelled, spit landing on Katsuki's face as he flinched away from the volume. "I was a fucking kid who had been tossed in a dumpster after his dad tried to kill him. I couldn't even remember who I was for *three years*. I had no identity, no home. I couldn't even feed myself, much less three other kids. How the *fuck* did you expect me to get them away safely? To what? Live in some abandoned warehouse like I did? To sell themselves so they can afford to eat? How is that any better?"

Katsuki was gasping, his feet kicking out and hands struggling in their restraints. The force of Dabi's fog alongside the fact that he couldn't *breathe* was making his vision go dark. "You could- 'ave- 'old someone-"

"Who? Who the fuck was I supposed to tell," Dabi demanded, shoving away from the boy and ignoring the wet gasps as Katsuki sucked in desperate breaths. "I had a fucked up quirk that everyone knew hurt me and my dad is a *pro-hero*. Who the fuck was going to believe me that it was him who did this instead of my own fucking quirk? You think I hadn't told people before? You think I didn't *try* that already? The fucking system is corrupt, it's broken because it lets bastards like him stay on the top while the rest of us are trying so hard to just *survive.*" Dabi was pacing now, his fingers clawing through his dark hair and coming away black. If Katsuki looked close enough he could see the hint of white roots, dingy and greyed from the dye. "And I tried, okay? I protected Shouto from him for *years*. When he got his quirk dad was so excited to start him on training but he was four fucking years old. He was *four*. So I took it instead. I trained and I trained until my skin was boiling. I jumped in front of his attacks when Shouto couldn't stand anymore. I pissed him off when he started screaming at mom so that he'd hit me instead. You think I didn't pay my dues?"

The words drew Katsuki up short because he knew that. Shouto didn't

like talking about Touya much, but he'd told them some stuff since he'd moved into the Midoriya household. He'd told them about the hours and hours Touya would spend training so that Shouto didn't have to. Told him how the other boy would hide him in the closet or under the bed when their dad came calling so he wouldn't get hurt.

Katsuki *knew* that Touya had tried. He did.

"He's out now."

Dabi tensed again, turning to Katsuki with wide, shocked eyes. "What?"

"I-I got him out." Katsuki's voice was wrecked from the earlier asphyxiation and he was sure his throat was no doubt already starting to bruise, but he pushed passed it because Dabi was right. He *had* tried and he was *still* trying in his own fucked up kind of way. "I got him out. I couldn't really help the others but Natsuo is at college and Fuyumi said she's fine since he isn't interested in her quirk. But Shouto- my mom helped, and so did Eraserhead, but Shouto's living with me now. He's- Endeavor isn't a problem."

There was a long moment of silence where the only sound in the room was their heavy breathing. Dabi looked like he didn't quite believe the teen, but after a moment his eyes fell on the handprint burnt into Katsuki's throat. It had long since healed by now, but it was still tender and angry looking. Still an ugly reminder of where Shouto had come from.

"He did that?" Dabi asked, his words back to their cool and indifferent tone even if his eyes still showed that he was struggling with this conversation.

Katsuki swallowed and nodded. "I may have cussed him out," the boy said, grinning when Dabi snorted at him. "Worked in our favor though because we got video footage of it all and my mom basically told him to give us Shouto or get sued."

The snort turned into a laugh and Katsuki watched as Dabi dropped back into the chair in the corner, his head in his hands as he fought with himself to either laugh or sob. After a while, he sighed and drug a tired hand through his hair before looking back up at Katsuki.

"Thank you," he said quietly, "for helping Shouto. I can't let you go but- I'll make sure the others aren't too hard on you. We might be villains, but we aren't awful people. The boss-" he paused, a frown on

his face as he turned towards the closed door of the room. “Everyone here is a little bit broken, whether we like it or not. We aren’t good, but we’re not… we won’t hurt you. Not without a reason at least. Shiggy just has questions he thinks you can answer and he needed an excuse to take you.”

“And my friends?” Katsuki frowned, narrowing his eyes at the villain. “They were in that forest too.”

“No one died,” Dabi said with a roll of the eyes. “I don’t even think anyone got hurt that bad. We probably lost more people, honestly, but they were mostly just extras. Look- just answer Shiggy’s questions and you’ll get out of here fine. And when you see Shouto-“

He didn’t continue, his words trailing off as he pushed himself to his feet and shoved his hands in his pockets, looking so much more tired than he had before Katsuki had started screaming at him. Katsuki didn’t say anything back. He didn’t promise not to tell Shouto about his brother, and he wasn’t sure if Dabi wanted him to or not. Perhaps it was best that it was left open as Dabi left, best that neither of them voiced it because Katsuki was sure Dabi didn’t even know what he wanted when it came to his family. He’d been fighting to survive for so long, fighting for revenge on his father for so long, he wasn’t sure how not to.

Now all Katsuki had to do was survive Shigaraki.

Chapter End Notes

> I may be gone but that doesn't mean you get a break! DRINK YOUR WATER!

Chapter 47: A Choice

Chapter Summary

Katsuki finally talks to Shiggy.

Chapter Notes

Hi guys! Long time no see. I'm super sorry about the long break, but I've been crazy busy with school and work and my thesis project. I've barely had any time for my fanfics. That being said, this chapter is a lot shorter than the others, but please forgive me. It's literally all I had the energy for today and I really wanted to get it out for you guys. hopefully the inspiration sticks around and I can pop out a few more chapters before it disappears again.

WARNINGS:
Major spoilers for Shiggy's backstory if you're not caught up with the manga or show
Death and violence (not super descriptive but there is a description of an animal death)
Canon-typical abuse (past)
Panic attacks
Bile/Vomiting aftermath

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Hello Starlight.”

“Inari—“

Katsuki was back, his body loose and heavy, the air around him sharp like electricity. The familiar dark hair and pale skin of the Inari before him felt like a hug and a welcome home. He could feel it’s arms around him even as it hovered an arm’s length away. He could feel their lips on his hair, their fingers cradling his cheeks and he leaned into the sensations, soaking in the calming energy to quell the anxious dread he’d been soaked with all day.

“My strong little fox,” they whispered. “You have questions.”

It was a statement, and Katsuki found that he did in fact. Was that why he was here? Did they come because he needed help?

“Ask them, little one. You don’t have much time.”

He remembered them saying last time that he didn't belong here, that he wasn't supposed to be there but they'd been selfish and wanted to see him. Wanted to see their star. But this time? Did they still just want to see him or had he summoned them? Would they answer his questions? Was he allowed to even ask them? What did he even need to ask?

"Shigaraki," Katsuki found himself saying quietly, letting his eyes slip closed as the Inari cradled his face close. "He's- he's a hybrid like me, right? He needs help, right?"

The Inari hummed, their lips vibrating with the sound as they pressed them to his cheekbones. "I know nothing of a Shigaraki, but I do know the boy beneath him. Shimura Tenko was the name we gave him."

"We? You created him? Like you did me?"

Black hair spun through the air like dark tendrils, wisps of midnight in the otherwise bright white of whatever space he was visiting. The Inari shook their head and wrapped their arms around him from behind, directing his attention towards a muggy grey smudge in the distance. "I work with light and creation, but there are many of us who do what I do. I know another, the empty to my full, the lost to my found. The death to my life."

Death.

Katsuki could still taste the decay and ash on his tongue from when Shigaraki—Shimura?—got too close to him. Could still feel the way his skin had flaked away and his lungs had dried up. It's what he imagined death would feel like.

"Yes," the Inari hummed, it's arms draped over Katsuki's shoulders. "His children often feel like that."

Felt like death? Katsuki had to wrack his mind for all that he'd learned about yokai over the years. Izuku would have known immediately, he was sure of it, but it wasn't until recently that Katsuki had even started learning more about what he was and what the others were. But a death spirit?

"Shinigami," he muttered, gaze focused on the haze growing in the distance, like just the word was pulling it towards him. "He's a Shinigami."

"A hybrid of one, yes," the smooth voice of his Inari replied, a smile on their face.

He didn't know how to feel about that, not really. He didn't know much about the other yokais, but he knew the negative connotations around that

one. The evil energy they gave off, the death and destruction that followed them.

The Inari clucked their tongue and squeezed Katsuki tighter, shaking their head. "None are born evil, starlight. The Shinigami are no more evil than the kitsune are good. They are creatures of death and destruction, but those are not bad things. A dying forest cannot grow until it's been burnt to the ground. A soul cannot be reborn until it's body gives away. Death is a way of life, an antithesis to birth. One cannot exist without the other but that does not make one better or worse."

"He's killed people."

"So have you."

Katsuki couldn't help but flinch at that, the taste of the nogitsune's blood flooding his mouth in reminder.

"We all make choices, little one," they continued and as the dark grey grew closer, Katsuki could see a figure inside of it.

It was a boy. Small, so much smaller than Katsuki, with black hair and big red eyes. His tiny hands were clutched in front of his chest as he stared past Katsuki, and he was crouched like he was protecting himself from being seen. It reminded Katsuki of himself when he'd first gotten his quirk, when he'd first hurt Izuku on accident and refused to touch anyone for two months straight. Katsuki didn't have to ask to know it was Shigaraki, didn't have to see the scars or the grey-blue hair.

"Sometimes," the Inari said as a hand reached out from the darkness towards the little boy, "the choices are made for us. Our options are limited, our paths unclear. So we make the choice that hurts the least."

"His sensei," Katsuki said, glaring as the little boy reached up and took the hand, his little pinky extended so he didn't hurt whoever the person was. "I told Zawa I thought he wasn't in control."

The Inari nodded and a moment later Shigaraki was standing in front of them, towering over Katsuki like he had that day in the mall. His red eyes weren't focused on them, but his fingers were clawing at his throat like he was digging for something he couldn't find.

"Shinigami are drawn to death," the Inari told him quietly, aS one by one, the rest of the league began to appear out of the darkness. First Kurogiri, then Dabi. Toga and Spinner, Compress and Magne. Somewhere behind Dabi there was someone else, their figure unclear and fuzzy, facing away

with their back pressed against Dabi's. He could barely make out the hint of blonde hair and red feathers. "They need not cause it, but they are drawn to it. Drawn to the despair and desperation that comes with it. He may not know why, but he will always find himself heading towards death."

He didn't know the story of the league, didn't know why they were together or how they were all villains. Some of them he did—like Dabi's family or Toga's teeth—but he knew there must be death within them if Shigaraki surrounded himself with them.

"He's made himself a pack," Katsuki said after a moment, observing the villains around him. "Like a family, like Hitoshi and the others."

"It helps him taper the urge," they agreed, and now that they said something, Katsuki noticed that Shigaraki had stopped scratching at his throat, his gaze intent on the others. "It helps with the itch underneath his skin. It isn't as strong as your bonds." They traced the symbol over Katsuki's forehead, following the lines down his cheeks and over his arms. "He is unbonded, untrained, unsure. He does not know what he is, nor what he is capable of, and there is another trying to darken his mind. Manipulating him with his nature."

That strange protective urge rose up in Katsuki again, just like he'd told Aizawa after the mall incident. Like he wanted to help, needed *to help in some way, but he didn't know how.*

"Oh starlight, you are just as I intended," they whispered against his skin but before they could say more, something in the air shifted, the Inari's head tilting like they were listening for something. "Interesting," they said.

Katsuki raised an eyebrow, turning to look in the other direction. He could feel it now too. A pressure on his mind, warm and familiar. The scent of lavender wafted over him but he couldn't find the source.

"You must be truly special to bring him here," the Inari whispered, fingers gently nudging Katsuki's chin until he could see a familiar figure opposite to where the League stood. "He calls to you."

And they were right. Now that he was looking, listening*, he could hear Hitoshi calling his name desperately into the empty space around them. He sounded frantic, worried, desperate. It tugged at that protective thread in Katsuki's heart.*

"Oi, eyebags, you're disturbing the peace!"

Hitoshi jumped, whirling around to face the blonde, his eyes wide with shock as they landed first on Katsuki, then on the Inari behind him.

"Kat! Shit, you're okay!" the satori sighed, stepping forward to grab at Katsuki's face, twisting it this way and that to make sure he was in one piece. "Your bond went quiet and Izuku and Shouto couldn't reach you. We were worried- we thought-" he cut himself off before he could go further and took a deep breath, eyes trailing back to the Inari like he still wasn't sure about their presence. "Where are we? Where are you?"

Katsuki could feel the Inari smile behind him, their voice soothing like a balm across a burn as they spoke. "You are in the place between places," they said simply. "It is the only place I can speak with my little fox. You, little monkey, are not supposed to be here."

Hitoshi's purple eyes widened impossibly further and Katsuki could smell the fear wafting off of him, but the kitsune just snorted. "They aren't going to hurt you, dumbass. That would defeat the purpose of making me. What the hell are you doing here? How did you even get here?"

"I was looking for you," Hitoshi said as if it was obvious. "I'm- well, technically I'm with Aizawa right now. You remember he said his powers can enhance or erase others? He's boosting my connection to you, I guess. It took me forever to find you though. This place," he swallowed, glancing around at the blinding white around them, "it's huge. I didn't think I was- I was afraid I'd get lost if I stayed much longer. What are you *doing in here?"*

"Talking with Inari, obviously," Katsuki said with a roll of his eyes. He gestured towards the being behind him. "Look, I'm at some kind of bar, I think. The League has me cuffed so I can't use my quirk. I can probably give you more details when I wake up, but I need you to hold off on finding me."

Confusion and anger swirled around Hitoshi like a storm. "What? Why the fuck would we do that?"

"Just tell Aizawa that I'm working on what I told him in the hospital. He'll know what I'm talking about. I just need time-"

Bruising hands gripped at Katsuki's biceps and Hitoshi drew closer, his fingers digging between the muscles of the blonde's arms. "Kat, no! They're going to kill you. We can't- we've survived way too much already to lose you now. I don't even know what will happen if we lose you now. Momma Inko hasn't stopped crying, the pack is frantic, Izuku and Shouto are… well they're obsessed with finding you. They haven't been eating, Kiri has

barely left the gym, it's a nightmare."

"Then hold them together," Katsuki ordered, raising his own hands to tighten around Hitoshi's wrists. "You're my second hand. You're the only one who really understands how this pack works, how the bond works. You have to hold them together until I get back."

"But-"

"I will *be back, Toshi," the blonde said, because he knew it was true. "I've got a number one hero to kick out of his spot and a fuck ton of idiots who would get themselves killed if I wasn't there to protect them. So you'll bet your ass I'll be back, okay? So hold them together and tell Aizawa to give me some time."*

Hitoshi looked like he wanted to argue. His eyebrows were furrowed, his jaw clenched. He looked torn between trying to protect Katsuki and knowing the fox was right. After too long, he heaved a sigh and nodded. "How much time?"

"Just a day. I just gotta talk to the guy. Just give me a day."

"Okay," the other yokai muttered, pulling Katsuki into a hard hug. "If you don't come back, I'll kill you."

"They trust you," the Inari smiled once Hitoshi's image disappeared. "You are the light that guides them, just as you were meant to be." Another nudge at his chin had Katsuki glancing back towards the League. They hadn't moved, but Shigaraki was looking at him now, instead of the others. "There are others out there, others who are lost and need your help."

As Katsuki stared at the other leader, the league behind him slowly began to fade away, the Inari disappearing with them until it was just Katsuki and Shigaraki left. One lit by the blinding light around them, and the other hovering just inside the darkness. It felt like an impossible task. Helping Shigaraki. Katsuki didn't even know where to start, didn't know if he even could *help the villain. How far gone was he already? Who was holding his mind hostage? Why were they using him specifically?*

There were too many questions, too many unknowns.

"What if I can't do it?"

"You only need to try, little one," the Inari spoke again, their voice echoing around him like a warm embrace. "The choice, in the end, will be his to make."

When Katsuki finally woke up, red eyes were there staring back at him. For a moment, he wondered if he'd never woken at all, but the heavy cuffs on his wrists and the ugly walls of the room he was in told him otherwise.

Shigaraki was there, though, sat in a chair in front of him, barely an arms-length away. The hand that usually covered his face was gone, giving Katsuki an unhidden view of the other man's face. He looked… oddly content when their eyes met, his shoulders slumped tiredly and his legs pulled up in front of him so he could rest his chin on them. He looked like a little kid, like the little boy Katsuki had seen in the in-between, but there was something darker in his eyes. Something ugly and angry. *An itch.*

"I dream about you sometimes," the villain said in that scratchy voice of his. "Ever since that day at your school. You're always there, in the distance. *Shining*." He spat the last word, a grimace twisting on his cracked and broken lips like the word itself pained him to say. He raised a hand to scratch at his neck. "I can never get closer, never touch you, but you're always fucking *there*."

"Untie me," Katsuki said, his own voice slightly cracked with disuse and lack of water. He shifted his hands slightly, raising them despite the weight of the cuffs cutting into his wrists. "I'll answer your questions if you let me out."

And much to Katsuki's surprise, the other man looked like he was considering it. Like he was warring with himself in his mind, trying to decide if it was a trick or not. He glanced around the room, eyes finding the corners, then the door, then the chair Katsuki was sitting on. After a moment, he sneer and slowly lowered his feet to the floor.

"No tricks, hero," he warned, reaching out slowly to unlock the cuffs.

The metal clanged heavy and loud on the floor, but Katsuki was too relieved to care. He rubbed at his wrists, but didn't move from his seat as Shigaraki curled back up on his own. His eyes were narrowed, watching Katsuki like a primal cat waiting for their prey to run.

But Katsuki wasn't going to run. He was a hero, damn it, and even if Shigaraki *was* a villain, that didn't mean he shouldn't get the chance for someone to help him.

"I can't tell you everything," Katsuki started, drawing one of his feet

up to the seat as he rested an arm over it. “Mostly because I don’t know everything, but I’ll tell you what I can.”

“What are you?”

“A yokai, or half of one,” Katsuki answered easily, shrugging. “I’m not hiding it. Fuckin’ went on live tv and everything. If you want specifics, I’m a Kitsune. Next question.”

“What am I?”

That had Katsuki pausing, taking the other man in with a calculating look. He wasn’t that much older than Katsuki himself, but it was hard to believe he’d gone this long (especially as a hybrid) without even an inkling to the truth. Did this Sensei of his really fuck him up that much? Was he that disconnected from his own heritage?

“You’re like me,” he said carefully, keeping one eye on the man’s face and the other on his hands just in case whatever Katsuki told him pissed him off enough to attack. “A hybrid yokai, but you’re not a Kitsune.”

Shigaraki frowned, like he’d known he wasn’t a fox, but the fact still confused him. “There are different kinds?”

Katsuki shrugged. “Yeah. I don’t know everything, didn’t grow up in the Ikai- that’s the spirit world. I figure pretty much anything someone believes is just myth is probably true. I only know a few others, one of which is a cat demon and another is a sort of monkey thing. You’re not an animal yokai though, not as far as I’m aware.” Red tinted nails dug into the side of Shigaraki’s neck, but he didn’t seem bothered by the pain. “Your itch,” he continued, nodding towards his hands, “it’s because of what you are. Because you’ve been hiding from it.”

Something changed in his eyes then, like Katsuki was standing on a precipice and Shigaraki was seconds away from pushing him over. “*What?*”

“The Inari told me, that’s like… it’s kind of like a god? I guess? It’s fucking confusing, whatever, the point is they told me that’s why you’ve got that itching under your skin,” he said. “You’re a Shinigami, a death spirit. You’re drawn to death to people who have experienced death and destruction in their lives. You feed off of it-“

“*No*!”

Katsuki jumped slightly when Shigaraki stood, the chair behind him clattering loudly to the ground.

“No, that’s not what sensei said,” the white haired man growled, fingers clawing even worse at his throat now, drawing thin rivers of red under the nails. “He wouldn’t lie to me! He said- he said-“

“It’s better, right?” Katsuki interrupted, not daring to move when Shigaraki was so unstable in front of him. “When the others are around? That’s why you’ve gathered yourself a little family? The itch, it’s not as strong when they’re near you. It’s because they’re all well versed in death. Some of them have even died themselves,” he said, thinking of Dabi’s flames bursting him from the inside out. “They feed the itch in you.”

But Shigaraki was shaking his head, tugging at his hair with a frantic sort of look in his eyes. “No, no, no. Sensei said it’s because I’m a monster, because I was born to destroy. The killing, it helps the itch-“

“No, the *death* helps the itch,” Katsuki corrected, shaking his head. He wasn’t quite sure that was true, but it felt right based on the information the Inari had given him. “Killing might help, but that death is temporary. It’s fast and unsatisfying because you leave it afterwards. Shinigami are agents of death, they’re guides for spirits. I can’t tell you I fuckin’ understand it all that much, but you’re not- you’re not a fucking monster. Fuck whoever called you that.”

“I’m a villain,” Shigaraki sneered, rounding on Katsuki with a ferocity that had the boy taking a step back. He didn’t go far, however, before Shigaraki’s hand was around his throat, shoving him up against one of the walls. It wasn’t hard enough to cut off his air, but it was painful on the sensitive skin of the burns Endeavor had left him. “I’m a killer, a murderer-“

Images of a little girl filled Katsuki’s mind as the fog on Shigaraki’s hand began to swarm around him. The distant sound of a barking dog, the sharp sting of a slap to the face. He could feel the ground crackling beneath his feet, feel the blood dripping from his fingers as fur and bones decayed in his arms. There were tears on his cheeks and his throat was raw from screaming.

There was rain in his hair, drip drip dripping down onto concrete as he walked. A hand reaching out from the darkness and a soothing voice telling him it was going to be okay. *“You killed them”* it said, as hands were rolled out on a cart. They curled around his limbs, cold

and stiff. *Dead*.

The doctor smiled.

“-sorry! I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry-“

“What the fuck did you do, crusty?”

Sounds slowly started fading back into Katsuki’s ears. Slightly muffled since he’d yet to adjust his hearing aids. He was curled into himself on the ground, a puddle of tears and bile before him and he could sense Dabi’s flames a few feet away. He was finding it hard to breath, but the itch under his skin- the itch under *Shigaraki’s* skin- was slowly fading with the other villain nearby. It took him a moment to realize that *he* was the one apologizing, not the villain.

“Nothing,” the leader snarled, shaking out his hand like just touching Katsuki had pained him as well. “Little hero decided to get in my head and regretted it.”

That wasn’t entirely true, but Katsuki didn’t argue it, just picked himself up and leaned on the wall when he began to sway too much. “Wasn’t your fault,” he managed to get out, his eyes blinking tiredly as Shigaraki froze in the doorway. “It wasn’t your fault. What happened. He shouldn’t have told you it was.”

“Shut up.”

Dabi was watching them with interested eyes, but he didn’t step in.

“He’s using you,” Katsuki tried again, clenching one fist in his shirt as another wave of nausea rolled through him and the other on the wall to hold himself up. “You have to see that. You can be better than him, can change everything. You all could. You’re sitting here planning a fucking massacre because you think the heroes are bad, but you’re not actually doing anything to make it *better*.”

“Shut *up*!”

“You’re not his puppet!” Katsuki screamed back, tails thrashing behind him and fangs bared when Shigaraki finally turned towards him. “You make a fucking *choice*. Murder millions of people or make some goddamn changes. It doesn’t matter, but make sure the choice is *yours*, not his.”

The room was quiet for a long time after that. Dabi still didn’t leave,

even when the conversation tapered off and Katsuki and Shigaraki were left huffing and glaring at each other.

“Take him back,” the villain finally said and Katsuki struggled not to collapse in on himself in surprise. Dabi looked just as shocked, his eyebrows raising as he turned towards his boss. “I’m tired of his fucking voice. Take him back to his precious heroes. Kill him. Drop him in a dumpster. I don’t fucking care, just get him out of here before I get dead fox on my hard wood.”

And then he left.

“Damn,” Dabi finally spoke, letting out a low whistle as those dangerous blue eyes slid back over to the blonde. “You really pissed him off. Not sure if I want to know what you saw in that fucked up head of his, but it must have been bad. Still, he didn’t kill you, so I guess that’s a plus.”

“You need to help him.”

Dabi hummed, leaning back on the wall himself and glancing at the door his leader had left out of. “Do I?”

“This sensei of his, the boss you all work for… he’s no good,” Katsuki growled out, the feel of the other man’s hand in his- in *Shigaraki’s*- made his skin crawl and his jaw want to clamp down and draw blood. “He can make a better choice, you all can. You just have to fucking do it.”

“And what,” Dabi asked, snorting, “be heroes? We’re wanted murderers, kid, there’s not much redemption for us.”

But Katsuki shook his head at the stubbornness. “There could be, if you wanted it. I said I was going to protect the people left behind, that fucking includes you whether you like it or not. If I got Shouto out, I can get you guys out. I just need him to trust me.”

Dabi looked at him then, *really* looked at him. The blonde wasn’t sure what he was looking for, but he either found it or he didn’t. Either way, he sighed and pushed himself back up, patting a heavy hand on the teenager’s shoulder. “You’re asking the impossible kid, but if anyone could do it, it’s you and your band of weird little misfits. Come on, we’ll have Kurogiri portal you home.”

Much to Katsuki’s surprise, the others told him goodbye. Shigaraki of course was nowhere to be found, but Toga wrapped him in a tight hug

that only had him dodging one knife, and Big Sis patted his shoulder hard enough to nearly send him sprawling across the floor. The others just waved goodbye when Kurogiri popped open a portal and nodded politely.

“Oi, brat.”

Katsuki paused, turning back around to see Dabi holding out a folded piece of paper. He took it carefully, glancing down to see a phone number staring back up at him. He frowned at it, raising an eyebrow at the arsonist.

“You can tell him, if you want,” the man shrugged, trying for all the world to look unbothered by the monumental choice he was making. “He’s out of that bastard’s house so… if he wants to call, or text, or whatever annoying shit you kids do, then,” he shrugged again, “whatever. Don’t get lost on the way back.” And then he turned and walked away.

Kurogiri’s fog was no better the second time as he stepped through it, but luckily it lasted less time before he was stumbling through to the other side. And right into Aizawa’s living room.

He’d only seen it once before, when he’d stormed in and demanded the man help Shouto and Hitoshi, but he’d recognize the old man’s scent anywhere and it only served to calm his racing nerves and confusion.

After a long moment of getting his feet back under him, Katsuki gave into the exhaustion and collapsed on the couch, barely gaining enough energy to send a single text.

I’m back.

Chapter End Notes

> So I have a question for everyone because you're all so crazy supportive and I honestly wouldn't have gotten this far without you!
> Anyway, as most of you know, I'm working on getting my Masters degree in Creative Writing with a focus in Speculative Fiction. So obviously, I love writing, not just fanfiction. I'm currently working on a book series for my masters thesis, but I'm also working on a side series as well, one that I want to start releasing as a serialization (so chapter by chapter.) My plan is to release it on Patreon on a first tier, and then the second and third tiers get

extra content, extra scenes, artwork, etc. But I was wondering if you anyone would be interested in something like that? No biggie if not, I'm just curious as to how much interest it might have.
(For some context, the story is about a teenage superhero named Phase struggling with the weight of his father's hero legend, while trying to forge his own path in making the world a better place. Add in a hot villain way too flirtatious for his own good, a best friend Phase may or may not be in love with, and a whole cast of queer, disabled, and POC characters, and you've got my series Blacklisted, first book Saints & Sinners.)
Anyway! I'm working on updating all my fanfics, but most of my creative energy is being sucked into other projects, so please forgive me for the long breaks.
Hope you're drinking your water!
-Goblin

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!